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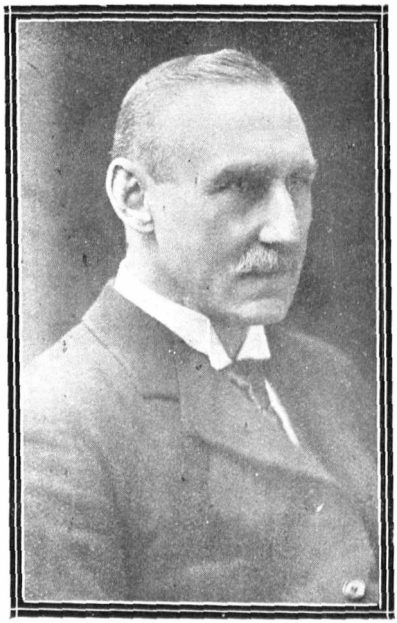

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Rt. Hon. THE EARL OF SELBORNE, K.G., G.C.M.G.,
who heads the influential Committee which will set up the Memorial to Hampshire and Island Units.

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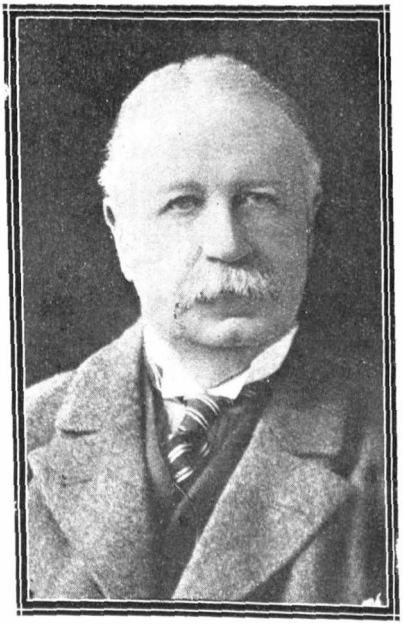
Major-General Rt. Hon. J. E. B. SEELY, C.B., C.M.G.
Lord-Lieutenant of the County.



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Major-General SIR CHARLES B. KNOWLES, K.C.B.,
Colonel, The Hampshire Regiment.

The Battle Story
of the
Hampshire Regiment

By F. E. STEVENS

With FOREWORD
BY THE RIGHT HON
THE EARL OF SELBORNE

Second Edition.

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FOREWORD

By the Right Hon. the EARL OF SELBORNE

MILITARY, like other history, demands of the historian the study and research of a lifetime. This little story about the Hampshire Regiment does not profess to rival the works of Professor Oman or of Mr. Fortescue, but it does set forth to tell the men and women, the boys and girls of Hampshire and of the Isle of Wight something about what the County Regiment did in the Great War, and, by way of introduction, it tells them how and when the County Regiment came into existence.

Hampshire is essentially the home of the West Saxons, and the chief features of West Saxon character are imperturbable good sense and reliability. The old 37th and 67th Regiments, now the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Hampshire Regiment, had behind them, when the Great War broke out, two centuries of steady achievement, in which the name of their county under their charge had never gone back in reputation. The Hampshires were everywhere famed for steadiness; they never disgraced themselves in war; they never played the fool in peace; they could always be trusted for courage, for efficiency, and for conduct.

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In the supreme test of the Great German War they have been tried to the uttermost endurance of man, and they have not failed, and this is true, equally and wholly true, of the Territorial Battalions, the lineal descendants of the Hampshire Volunteer Regiments, and of the new Service Battalions raised by Lord Kitchener.

The Hampshire race of men, moulded to military service in the traditions of the Hampshire Regiment, has once again proved itself a very foundation stone of England, and on England, as the Bolsheviks know well, the ordered progress of human liberty mainly depends to-day.

The County and the Island ought to be supremely proud of these men, and thankful for this wonderful record. In every city, town and village there will be a fitting memorial to the fallen, but I would plead that the County Memorial should not be forgotten. There in Winchester, the Capital of the West Saxons, under the shadow of the old Cathedral, City and County together will raise a monument on which will be inscribed the names of all the officers and men of all the Battalions of the Hampshire Regiment, in comradeship with those of the Hampshire Yeomanry, of the other Territorial Units of the County, of H.M.S. "Hampshire," and of the citizens of Winchester who perished in the Great War, and where the achievements and sacrifices of all the parishes of the County and Island will be gathered into one sacred record, from century to century to bear silent witness to successive generations of Hampshire men and women what manner of men were their forefathers.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

IN judging this tribute to the glory of the Hampshire Regiment, which has been elaborated from a series of articles which appeared in "The Hampshire Independent," the reader is asked to remember some of the circumstances which governed the preparation of the record. It is not a history of the Regiment, a piece of work which will be carried out at the appropriate time by the person or persons most suited to that important task. All that is sought here is to present a series of pictures—snapshots from the battle-line—dealing with the splendour of our men on every front; their invincible steadfastness; their selfless valour; their coolness in infinite peril; and their resourcefulness and cheery disregard at all times of all save the tradition of which they were the inheritors. It should be borne in mind that detail must often be lacking because of the need that there was for the suppression of battalion numbers and even at one period of the war of regimental names. In spite of the blanks which these factors necessitate, this booklet furnishes a coherent record in outline of the imperishable renown of the men of the Hampshire Regiment in every area of war save East and South-West Africa.

F. E. S.

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Battle Story of the Hampshire Regiment

CHAPTER I.—Two Centuries of Fighting

HISTORICAL.

Mr. John Fortescue, author of "The History of the British Army," and one of the foremost of our military historians, once wrote these words concerning the Coldstream Guards: "There are regiments which through no fault of their own have been dogged by bad luck. Occasionally through whole generations and even centuries some hapless corps finds itself shut out from all chance of active service, or condemned only to such a share of it as can confer no distinction or may even offer no escape from disgrace. There are other cases in which a regiment seems doomed to periodic annihilation by contests, glorious indeed but hopeless, against overwhelming odds. But there are also regiments to which from time to time fate assigns the forefront of the hottest battle, as though wishing to prove that, from generation to generation, they will be found equal to any trial, and, having done all, will stand. Such a regiment is the Coldstream Guards." Such a regiment, Mr. Fortescue might have said with equal truth, is the Hampshire Regiment. The Coldstreams and the Hampshires have been in the battle line together on half a dozen occasions before this war. It was so at Oudenarde, Dettingen, and Fontenoy, and elsewhere long before their association in the hottest fighting of the greatest of all wars. Indeed I am going to make the claim boldly that no regiment in the British Army has a record of such diversified service, because in every area of war, save those of Eastern, Western and South-Western Africa, one of the Hampshire Battalions bore a part, and one of distinction. There was a Battalion at Le Cateau, at the Marne, at the Aisne; there was a Battalion in the 29th Division, the immortals of the Gallipoli beaches; there was a portion of a Battalion at Kut. Another Battalion fought at Gaza, and thence through to Jerusalem. Several Hampshire Battalions were at Salonika, and in the thickest of the fighting there; one went to Italy with Sir H. Plumer; a Hampshire unit pressed through Persia in the vital work of keeping communications open and of pacification in the war's later days, and then when the fighting was officially done Hampshire men were sent to Siberia to assist once more in gathering the fruits of the victory, and for the purpose of providing a nucleus around which the shattered remnants of the National Army of Russia might gather. To Northern Russia, too, a battalion was sent. That is the skeleton of the story of the Hampshire Regiment in the war; there is the proof, scarcely in need of emphasis having regard to the earlier history of the County Regiment, that the Hampshires were ever in the forefront of the fight.

The earliest records of the fighting Hampshires—they were called the Royal Tigers in India and the Stonewallers in France—are contained in the tiny red-bound volume, which is one of the treasures of the Hampshire Regiment's library at the Depot at Winchester. It is called "The annals of the 37th North Hampshire Regiment," and its author was Colonel John Everard Whitting. It is not in a literary sense a record of the corps, but it is immensely valuable in its laconic chronology of battle names, and in its authority. But for it we should be without knowledge of the early part of the Hampshire's battle story, covering a period of English history in which the battle possibilities were frequent and varied. An outbreak of war called the 37th into being, the regiment being raised in 1702. I believe it is a fact that the regiment was raised in Ireland; it is certain that the first commandant was Colonel Thomas Meredith, who had been a captain in the Dragoon Guards. The war of the Spanish Succession was raging between the Grand Alliance, Britain, Holland, Portugal, and the Savoy on the one hand, and France

and Spain on the other. Flanders was the chief battle ground, though the war spread into Holland, and into Bavaria on the west. The Hampshires were sent into what may be called the middle or Belgian theatre of war, as part of the armies of the great Duke of Marlborough. They took part in the siege of Huy, and were in Holland for some time. Blenheim was the first great battle in which the 37th took part. They were at Ramilies, at Oudenarde, fighting by the way-side with the Coldstreams, and at Malplaquet, the fiercest battle of that war, and until our own times one of the most savage in history. In the course of the Marlborough battles Mons was occupied, as well as Douai, the Hampshires being concerned in the holding of the latter. Bethune and San Venant were other place-names in the battle story of the 37th.

From France, in the early part of the 18th century, before indeed the fighting was done, the 37th was part of the British force which was sent to Canada for the subjugation of Quebec. It was an ill-starred venture, resulting in failure, and before that in shipwreck in the St. Lawrence.

Thereafter thirty years of peace, and then the Continent again, the 37th forming part of the British, Hanoverian, and Hessian Army, commanded by King George II., which opposed a greatly superior force under Marshal Noailles and the Duc de Grammont. Dettingen is one of the proudest names upon the Hampshire battle roll. At Fontenoy the Colonel of the Hampshires, Sir Robert Munro, held a high command in the Allied forces, that battle, according to the record of an officer who took part, being "one of the bloodiest as to officers that has happened to the British within the memory of man." That is an out of date piece of British history now, but it gives an excellent notion of the contemporary view.

A year later the 37th formed part of Hawley's force which defeated the Pretender in the second Jacobite rising, and it was one of the units of the Duke of Cumberland's Army at Culloden. In that battle the 37th was commanded by Col. de Jean, who succeeded Colonel Sir Robert Munro—killed at Falkirk—the Hampshiremen's losses being 14 killed, and five officers and 68 men wounded. It is clear that the 37th were in the very thick of the fight, though the full casualty lists of Cumberland's army contained but a couple of hundred names.

Minden, one of the battles of the Seven Years' War, in which Britain was fighting in every quarter of the globe, is also a name which the Hampshires treasure upon their colours. It was a Prussian battle between the English, Hessians and Hanoverians on the one hand, and the French on the other, and was chiefly remarkable in that it involved the trial by court-martial of Lord George Sackville for disobedience of orders. The 37th was not employed on active service after Minden for fourteen or fifteen years, but in 1776 the corps was sent to America for a second time, being part of the force under Sir William Howe which inflicted very heavy defeat upon the Americans. The regiment afterwards fought through the American War of Independence, serving more particularly in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and it was on their return from the west that the link between the 37th and Hampshire was definitely forged, the title of the North Hampshire Regiment being conferred upon it.

CHAPTER II.—The Peninsula and the East

About this time the headquarters at Winchester came into occupation. The Depot of the Hampshires has a curious story. It was intended as a Royal Palace for Charles II. when commenced a hundred years or so earlier, and was built from the designs of Sir Christopher Wren. The site was that of the old castle, but the historic continuity of the place was broken by the death of the King, and it was in fact never completed. It remained derelict for years, but was at length fitted up as to part of it at least, as a place of reception for prisoners of war and for French refugees. In 1796 the old King's House took on a definitely military character, and was so used, altered, and enlarged as occasion required, for a great many years. A fire destroyed part of the buildings in 1894. A portion of the King's House remained, being incorporated in the splendid new barracks when they

were built. King Edward laid the foundation stone, and they were reoccupied about 1906.

The Hampshires also fought in the Peninsular War, being part of Wellesley's Army, when, after Corunna, he took command in Spain. They were in the field force of Sir Hew Dalrymple, a former Colonel of the Regiment, who was in supreme command for a time. One of the most historic names on the Hampshire battle roll is Barossa, in which there was a thrilling bayonet charge up a hill, and a frightful death roll. Neither of the two Battalions of the County Regiment was at Waterloo. There after came garrison work in various parts of the world—including the business of quelling a miners' riot in Durham, until the Regiment returned to India. It suffered heavily in the battle of Dinapore in Scinde, and a little earlier had set up a notable record by marching right across the Peninsula, being the first British unit to do so. Going from India to China the Hampshires registered a feat which stood as a record for half a century;

At the storming of the Taku forts the 67th (which, by the way, had General Wolfe, of Quebec as its first Colonel) won four V.C.'s in a single day. In the storming of the forts, one of the most brilliant of the little fights of history, Ensign Chaplin, when seriously wounded, planted the colours on the fort, which he was the first man to mount. Lieut. N. Burslem and Private Thomas Lane were associated in the act which brought them the highest honour a soldier can gain. Before an entrance was obtained they swam a ditch, enlarged a breach in the walls, and entering the fort made the way easy for the attackers. Both, however, were severely wounded. The gallantry of the fourth Hampshire man was not dissimilar. He was Lieut. E. H. Lenon, who, in the company of Lieut. Rodgers and Private McDougall, both of the Essex Regiment, swam a ditch to the northern forts and entered an embrasure. While still in the East the Hampshires served under General Gordon at the capture of Khading in the Taeping rising. In the second Afghan War the 67th served with high distinction. They were part of Lord Roberts' column, and fought at Charasia, in which, as the result of an outflanking movement, and a series of rushes, the heights, which barred the way to Cabul, were carried. The regiment was also part of the force which defeated the Afghans at the battle of Sherpur. The colours were handed to the regiment by the General himself with these words: "I seem to be the proper person to give them, but I am quite sure that no one has a better right to them, for no one did better service.".

The 67th meantime saw service in Burma, being present at the capture of the Minola forts and the taking of Mandalay. During the journey up the Irrawaddy to the capital a remarkable discovery was made in the shape of uniforms, bearing the word "Hants" upon the shoulders, clothing the dead Burmese. The explanation of this curious instance of Hampshire men firing on their own uniforms was quite simple. Old uniforms had apparently been sold to second-hand dealers in India, and by them sent to King Thebaw for the equipment of his troops. It was not the only instance of that sort of thing which the Burma War supplied. Under Lord Cardwell's regime the 37th and 67th were linked together, and later still they received the names 1st and 2nd Battalions, Hampshire Regiment. For over 100 years previously the 37th was the North Hampshire Regiment, and the 67th the South Hampshire Regiment.

The 1st Battalion subsequently served in the Arabian Boundary Commission, and against the Mullah in the punishing fighting in Somaliland. Thus occupied it missed the South African War, in which, however, the 2nd Battalion (including a Volunteer Composite Company) took part, being present at the Battle of Paardeburg. About the time of the Battle of Kareo Siding it suffered rather seriously from a railway smash at Barberton, in which 30 Volunteers were killed and 60 injured.

CHAPTER III.—1914: 1st Battalion WESTERN FRONT

The task of piecing together the new war record of the Hampshires is one of very much greater difficulty. The wars of history in which the Hampshires had a share are so thoroughly well documented that industry and enthusiasm for a task which is sometimes a little tedious are all that is required.

Moreover, the Regiment has been fortunate in times past in having on the roll officers who have delighted in piecing together the regimental records for the encouragement of the particular generation of the Regiment with which they were associated, and generally for the greater glory of the Hampshires. Colonel Westmorland, who commanded at the Depot at Winchester during the war, was one of these, though the censorship, which obviously he could not help, prevented him from perfecting the records in the regimental journal. But for that fact the full story of the Hampshires' battle story would have been told in the well arranged pages of the journal, and the present record would not have been necessary at all.

Fortunately we know a good deal about the earlier part of the Hampshires' battle story, because the ukase about non-identification of Battalions (and later of even Territorial names) did not operate in those early times. We had not learnt that the German Intelligence Department made a habit of piecing isolated bits of information together, and of patiently building up from them the British Order of Battle.

The 1st Battalion was at Colchester when the war began, and the 2nd on distant garrison duty at Bombay. The County Regiment was not "in" at the very beginning, but it was in the first of the reinforcing divisions, and the 1st Battalion was in the very thickest of the fighting before August (1914) was out. The German bull rush struck the 1st and 2nd British Corps, commanded respectively by Lord (then Sir Douglas) Haig and Sir Horace Smith Dorrien (the latter succeeding Sir J. Grierson, who died suddenly soon after landing in France).

Everyone has a mental picture of the retreat from Mons. It may be an accurate one or the reverse. It may be the reflection of the personal narrative of a loved one who bore a heroic part in an unforgettable manœuvre, or perhaps an image limmed by the writers of that, one of the greatest moments of the war. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle deals very vividly with the first crashing together of the armies. "Rifles, machine guns, and field pieces were all roaring together, while the incessant crash of the shells overhead added to the infernal uproar. Men lost all sense of time, as they thrust clip after clip into their rifles. The German swarms staggered on bravely under that leaden sleet. Then they halted vacillated and finally thinned, shreded out and drifted backward like a grey fog torn by a gale." They reformed and came again in a grey cloud; were swept away again; and yet again. Sometimes they drove the women and children of the stricken villages before them; sometimes (according to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle) they fought with the width of a road only separating them. Sometimes they were at hand grips. So the valiant British fought until they learnt that their flank was exposed by the rushing of the Sambre, and that retreat was the only possible course. The British Army was not beaten of course. Unexpectedly large though the Hun legions were, they were held for a time; the head of the monster was being severely battered, and the British losses (according to our later conception of losses in pitched battles) were not desperately alarming. But to retreat was the only thing to do, as the British Commander recognised.

Lord French told the story of his decision later on. "General Joffre told me," says the Field-Marshal, "That his information led to expect that I might be attacked the next day by at least three German corps and two cavalry divisions. Appreciating the situation from the point of view which all reports clearly established, my last hope of an offensive had to be abandoned, and it became necessary to consider an immediate retreat from our present forward position. . . . Some of the Staff Officers who were called into Headquarters to receive orders . . . thought our position was much more seriously threatened than it really was, and, in fact, one or two expressed doubts as to the possibility of effecting a retirement in the presence of the enemy in our immediate front. . I did not share these views. . . However, I determined to effect the retreat, and orders were issued accordingly."

The Hampshires landed in France on the 24th August, 1914, just as the Germans were making their desperate at-

tempt to indent the British line at Maubeuge. The 4th Division of the Third Corps, to which the 1st Hampshires were attached, were on the lines of communication, and they were hurried in with the other units. General Pulteney was the Commander of the Corps, and General Snow of the 4th Division. The Battalion was brigaded with the 1st Somerset Light Infantry; the 1st East Lancashires—the 2nd Battalion fought on another historic field, shoulder to shoulder with the East Lancashires—and the 1st Rifle Brigade. It was the 11th Brigade, and General Hunter Weston was in command. Scottish, Irish, and Midland County units completed the corps. They were at Ligny and its neighbourhood, straining at the leash, when they received the order to advance, and their part, as fresh troops, was to cover the great retreat, then in full swing. The Third Division indeed passed through their lines. Then they closed up again, and joined in the retreat—the way of Sorrow—back towards Le Cateau.

Through Le Cateau was a definite battle name, perhaps the most glorious on the Hampshire roll, it was a continuation of the battle of Mons, for like every other unit engaged in those fateful days of late August and early September, the Hampshires fought without intermission. The general situation was certainly no better. "The only thing for the men to do when they can't stand" said General Smith Dorrien, "is to lie down and fight." That is what they did. The part of General Snow's division was to protect the left flank of the Army, and the 11th Brigade, of which the Hampshires formed part, was near Fontaine.

When the operation was complete General Snow's force formed a defensive line, its purpose being to prevent the envelopment of the 2nd Corps. It may be that the use of this division of fresh troops made all the difference; at all events it made the growingly difficult operation of the withdrawal from Maubeuge just possible of achievement. The retreat to La Cateau began under circumstances which provided the most terrific test which has ever been presented to British soldiery. The German pressure was fairly evenly exerted; the gunfire was unbelievable—according to the standards then prevailing, and a great deal of it fell crashingly upon men who had been fighting without pause for the seventy hours. Even then they did not know when their chance of sleep would come.

The Hampshires and the other Battalions of General Snow's force were not at this time in such bad case, and it was upon them, luckily perhaps having regard to the pitable exhaustion in other parts of the line, that some of the heaviest of the enemy "punches" fell. It was inevitable. It was the part of the new troops to cover the retreat, and into that business they threw themselves with all their soul.

On August 26th, the Hampshires position was astride the railway line at Hancourt, where it ran in a deep cutting, the sides of which were covered with thick undergrowth. A Company had an exciting experience hereabouts. Suddenly, a gutteral German voice was heard within a yard or two of the leading file, and on the other side of a hedge. By chance, an advanced party of the enemy had got right within the Hampshires lines. They were as surprised as our own men. "Capt. Cecil," we are quoting one of the letters in the "Regimental Journal," "dashed into the scrub, followed by his platoon with fixed bayonets," and a merry rough and tumble followed. But the platoon had the ill-luck to be enfiladed, and Capt. Cecil, among others, was wounded.

It was, in every respect, a position of very great difficulty, but the needs of the situation were met with high efficiency by the County Regiment, as will be seen from this summary of the records of that tragic week which is garnered from the various accounts which have appeared from time to time in the "Regimental Journal." Some part of these records were in narrative form, and were the work of different officers; but the blanks have been filled in from letters which others have sent home describing particular incidents.

The enemy scouts attached a good deal of importance to the embankment. They worked along in small parties, occasionally making rushes, and rather more frequently being scattered by the dashes of the Hampshire infantrymen. In one of these little scraps they left seven dead on the metals.

These small brushes were followed by an attack in force upon Hancourt, the infantry being supported by a circle of guns. The Hampshires, in a forward position, were compelled to slowly withdraw. Meantime, the Prussian Guard were hammering at the East Lancashires close by, and at dusk "the whole column," I am quoting from an account in the "Regimental Journal" for one of the autumn months of 1914, "seemed hopelessly jammed. Guns and transport were two and three deep, and there were infantry in the fields at the side of the road. It really seemed the end; but, luckily, the German pursuit appeared to stop at nightfall."

CHAPTER IV.—The Marne. 1st Battalion

On the following day the Battalion came to a halt to let the 3rd Division pass, and the general confusion was added to by the desperate efforts of the inhabitants of the stricken villages to get away from the raining death about them. It hampered the retreat considerably, of course, but the movement of the troops was as orderly as the circumstances would permit, if somewhat scattered. Col. Jackson, the C.O., was wounded on this date, and fell into enemy hands, and the direction fell upon Major Barlow, who, with the greater part of the troops, struck across country in a south-westerly direction, eventually joining up with the rest of the 4th Division. Major Hicks, who was in charge of the rear-guard, attached himself to the 3rd Division temporarily. At one point the 1st Brigade of the Division fighting alongside the Hampshires, was cut in swathes by machine gun fire from an advanced German position which had been hidden. It was intensely harassing all through the retreat, this hateful outcrop of machine gunnery. Presently the British heavies got it in hand a bit, but it was bitter beyond words while it lasted. The Hampshires were guarding some quarries, not at first in the actual fighting positions, but in reserve. Presently they came up under a hail of light and heavy gunfire and machine guns frontally, and a scarcely less murderous fusilade from the flanks. Death rained from every quarter of the compass, but the valorous Hampshires and Rifle Brigade men with the East Lancashires and Somersets held as long as they were required. Then they fell into line again for the next stage of the retreat.

A stroke of ill-luck fell upon a small part of the Battalion. "We were in action all day," said a non-commissioned officer. "About six o'clock we had orders to retire. Germans were behind the outpost line. We were challenged in French by Germans, and before we knew of the trap we were ordered to put our hands up. Then we were disarmed."

When the land permitted—a ditch, a sunken road, anything which gave a trifle of cover—they turned in their tracks and pumped lead into the grey green masses. The enemy making the fullest use of motor transport placed a fresh line when one melted away beneath the fire of Snow's riflemen. Once with fortuitous artillery support they shook the whole German line, and then before it could recover pressed the attack home. The Germans broke, and a great indentation in the line which Snow inflicted, ruined the intentions of Von Kluck in the direction of envelopment.

One whole day was occupied in marching nine or ten miles, so heavy was the press of men and guns and transport; the next perhaps they made better progress. At all events, by 5.30 on one of the days of the week of never ending harassment, they reached their point absolutely dead beat; but they found friends, for parties of the R.A.M.C. and R.E.'s, who were already settled in more or less for the night, occupied themselves in preparing hot stews for the wearied Hampshire men and others before and behind them. The next day, 29th August, the Battalion were able to rest till four in the afternoon. Then the message came to continue the retirement. But the difficulties seemed to increase, a bridge broke down at one point and blocked the way again, the only course open being a detour through the woods and a concentration with the rest of the Division at the end of the stage.

On August 30th, hopes were revived by the receipt of the news that the retirement had come to an end. The news was not definite, and the Battalion sat in the roadway, dropped in its tracks, so to speak, till the precise order came. For six hours they waited, only to be disappointed at the end. The order, when it came, was that the retreat must continue. So the dismal march went on long into the evening. 'By now," said one writer in the journal, "We had marched right off our maps, and had not the remotest idea where we were." By the next day the Battalion was in the Forest of Compeigne, employed in picketting the Forest roads, cutting down trees and building barricades. "After dark there was the usual scene of confusion; roads jammed up with transport, and all sorts of absurd stories running up and down the column. Thus one member of the Battalion in a letter home. But this was, indeed, the end of the retreat; and at the turn of the tide the Hampshires had the luck to get a little rest while the fighting ebbed and flowed about them.

The Hampshires came splendidly out of their great testing time. Many of the men were in the firing line for the first time, it must be remembered, but they held together like veterans, though their casualties exceeded 20 per cent. The losses in the Brigade, indeed, exceeded 1,000. The men, as one officer summed it all up, "were tired, hungry, and depressed, by an unexpected and unexplained retirement; but

at no time did a single man show the slightest sign of panic or despair. They moved back as steadily as if on a field day at home."

The main features of the general military situation at the time of the Marne crossing are familiar to most people.

The situation had very sensibly improved by the end of the first week in September. Reinforcements had arrived in much more satisfactory numbers for one thing, and there was an improvement also in the matter of supply. No one knew it at the time; but it has become a cardinal point in the creed of the war historians since, that the opening of the battle of the Marne was the key date in the early war story. The German advance had come to an end—it stopped, as Lord French says, twenty-four hours earlier than was known at the time, and the general intention of Joffre when he had knowledge of the enemy situation, was a grand attack with all the British and French forces available. The British Army's battle-ground, as defined a few days ago by Lord French, was the country between the Marne, the Ourcq on the North, and the Grand Morin on the South. The British Commander hoped by crossing the river to reach by the quickest route, the line of retreat of the enemy. There were, as he has since stated, some attractive alternatives, but time was the essence of the business, and the preliminary attack on the Petit Morin river followed the general advance.

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September 6th was the date upon which the Marne battle began. The Hampshires were in the engagements almost from the beginning, being attached to the corps which General Pulteney commanded. Within three days the whole British Army was sweeping forward gloriously, carrying before it the broken spear-head of the German force. Everyone remembers the electrical effect of the sudden reversal of fortunes upon the minds of those who were waiting at home for the news that Paris had been abandoned.

The Hampshires' position was north-east of Soissons, and there is an epic incident on the records of the battalion following closely upon the heels of the fleeing Germans as the enemy blew up a bridge which they passed over. As soon as it could be repaired the Hampshires were across, completing the work of demoralisation which the artillery had begun, and assisting to break up the temporary resistance which the enemy attempted to put up when crossing the river in order to save their guns and stores.

This must have been at La Ferte, which was the subject of an especially interesting reference by Lord French. "The 4th Division . . . attempted," says the Field-Marshal, "to advance on the bridge, with a view to repairing it, and then to close and establish a bridgehead on the Northern bank; but all their attempts were frustrated by the German guns. Just before dark, however, Hunter Weston's 11th Brigade (1st Somersets, 1st E. Lancs., 1st Hampshires, and 1st R.B.) were able to reach the Southern bank, where a number of boats were seized. In these the brigade was pushed across, and by 10 p.m. had established an effective footing on the Northern bank, under cover of which a pontoon bridge was constructed by the Royal Engineers of the 4th Division, under very heavy fire. It was a very fine piece of work."

CHAPTER V.—The Stonewallers. 1st Battalion

There was another terrific scrap at Vregny, which was one of the plumes in the cap of the regiment. It was a key position of the German artillerists, and it was incredibly strong, because it was possible to fringe the hills with nests of machine guns. The Hampshires were used to this sort of thing, and they had acquired a ready way of smoking the wasps out, having learnt the lesson hardly on the road from Mons. They took the hill in three and a half hours, the machine gun fire of the enemy becoming even worse as they reached the upper slopes. It was perhaps the most galling experience which the men had encountered up to that time, but they dug themselves in, and held on until the supporting brigades had crossed the river and came to their support.

It was of course only an incident in the great scheme of hustling the Germans back, but it was that kind of thing repeated hour after hour which brought about the seeming miracle of the German defeat. As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who paid small attention to the incidental fighting, but kept his vision fixed on the great sweep of leading events, said: "The

battle was a fixed point in military history, because it was the first time since Napoleon that a Prussian army had been turned and driven."

It is difficult at this distance of the happenings of those early weeks of the war to pick up the Hampshires in the general melee, but it is beyond question that in attack, as in retreat, they were the fine flower of the British Army. In the despatch dealing, it is true, with a somewhat later stage of the fighting, Lord French said of the Hampshires that "it was impossible for the Germans to live anywhere near them." As the battle of Le Cateau merged into the Marne, so did the fighting on the Marne run, so to speak, into the Aisne. There was an infinitestimal pause, but it was only the interval which was necessary to bring the armies to the line of the river. St. Ives is another of the place-names which will shine for ever in the battle story of the Hampshires. There too, as at the Marne, the men of the 1st Battalion had to hang on by the skin of their teeth, pounded by the German heavy pieces, and pressed almost to their knees by line after line of the German infantry. Side by side with the Somersets they fought, and sometimes it was hand-to-hand work.

The Third Corps, to which they belonged, sustained a terrific hammering on the Aisne, and there were moments when it seemed hardly possible for human beings to maintain the bridgeheads they had so hardly won. At the Lys they were in it again, fighting for their lives to hold the trenches they had hastily dug. Once their trench was swamped with the enemy, but was recovered again. Another time a Hampshire position was entirely surrounded, but once more they got out and cleared the line. The men were badly plagued by the water-logged condition of their trenches. At times they had to use pumps, and in the intervals of fighting every moment was devoted to the strengthening of defences, the building up of fallen banks, and the construction of shelters.

At the beginning of October the Hampshires were moved to another point of the line, part of the journey was carried out by motor 'buses. "A desperate ride of six hours," says the late Major Connellan in the Hampshire Regimental Journal. "It was the most uncomfortable ride I have ever had, and we would have all infinitely preferred to walk." At one place en route they were billeted in a church. There was nothing very stable about the battalion situation in mid-October. Companies were detached now and again, so that the story of the Hampshires becomes a good deal confused. It is an impossibility to preserve a coherent narrative if one endeavours to follow the experiences of a particular company. One, for instance, received orders to capture and hold a village. They did it. The station of another was a bridge, and so on. It meant fighting of the heaviest kind, but all of an individual character. There were movements also of whole regiments to reinforce stricken brigades. Thus the Hampshires lost the company of the East Lancashires in the neighbourhood of Armentieres, and at that place were in reserve for a while. Presently they moved up again into the vital part of the line, and came very heavily into action at Houplines. It was here that Major Connellan, who had provided extremely valuable battle narratives to the Hampshire Regimental Journal, fell.

It was during the terrible trench fighting at the Aisne, a picture of which I have tried to suggest, that General Hunter-Weston gave the Hampshires their new name. In earlier military history the regiment was generally known as "The Royal Tigers" or "The Bengal Tigers"—a name which they won in India. Hunter-Weston christened them "The Stonewallers," because they never yielded a yard. It was on the Aisne that they won their new title, and it was at Ypres—in the second battle—that they earned the right to keep it.

Trench work at Ploegsteert followed. The Hampshires were there for several weeks, suffering constant attack from howitzers, trench-mortars, and machine guns, with an occasional assault in force by way of variety. Sometimes there were trench raids, and through all there was the pitiless December rain, turning country which was already boggy into a hopeless swamp. Major Parker, a valuable officer with the battalion, was killed in the mid-December fighting. The battalion held the Ploegsteert trenches throughout the winter, and witnessed those curious incidents of that 1914 Christmas which were connected with the Saxon efforts for a quiet Yuletide. The Hampshires had their spell in billets, of course, and occasionally were able to settle down to a day or two of comparative peace in the front line trenches. They suffered severely from sniping, losing in this way a number of valuable young officers. But on the whole they seemed to be pretty comfortable, so far that is as trench life ever was comfortable.

"Winchester House, Plugstreet"—two Hampshire Officers "at Home."

(By courtesy of the Editor of the Hampshire Regimental Journal).

Meanwhile the core of the fighting was at Ypres. Ypres was the British Commander's challenge to the German General Staff. Upon it hinged the whole position in the north. The Hampshires were not actually at Ypres at the beginning of that prolonged and fearful battle, their situation being a little farther to the south. With the opening crash the name of the 7th Division will be for ever linked. Upon the 7th Division the hammer-blow of the German advance towards the coast fell crushingly, but they held on to not particularly satisfactory positions, because every yard mattered. Presently the 1st Corps arrived to their relief, but they seemed hardly to make any difference, because the Germans' efforts were redoubled too. The High Command had orders from the Kaiser to take Ypres by December. The whole situation depended upon it, and but for the supreme doggedness and defiance of death of the 7th Division, and the daring strategy of the British Commander the attempt would have succeeded.

CHAPTER VI.—In the Salient. 1st Battalion

In the spring of '15 the regiment came right away from its lines at Ploegsteert and went into billets, with the expectation, according to the opinion current at the time, of a move further south. Plans were apparently changed by the new attack upon Ypres. In the middle of April the 11th Brigade were thrown into a gap near Zonnebeke, an area which the Canadians had been defending throughout the winter. The Hampshires went to the relief of the Canadians, who had been pressed back, and as they were leading the brigade, the task of filling the space which the last German bull-rush had left, was one of immense difficulty. In the course of the early fighting the Hampshires were the link between the 10th and 11th Brigades, and they endured a terrific battering from the enemy heavy pieces. The Germans held all the heights of the salient. Their guns never ceased for eight days and nights. Shells were falling in the trenches at the rate of fifty a minute. A good many men were lost while in the support trenches by an unlucky shelling, and once Headquarters were practically blown up. The Commanding Officer, the Adjutant, and three orderlies were buried, but they came out unharmed. Each night was given over to the business of making good the shattered trenches. It was a repetition in this respect of their experiences during the winter at Ploegsteert, the only difference was that the shelling was infinitely heavier, and the natural unpleasantness of the trenches they occupied increased.

At the beginning of May the 1st Battalion was withdrawn all together. Indeed there was a local retirement which involved the position the Hampshires had occupied. They crossed the Yser Canal without great difficulty, and were clear for a little while of the hateful salient. It was a really wonderful piece of work—that retirement—for though the Stone-wallers hated to give up trenches which cost them so many valuable lives, they did it when the need came with neatness and despatch. So quietly, indeed, that the Germans were still hammering the empty trenches with shells that they could not afford to use for twelve hours after the Hampshires were in reserve positions. About this time the Hampshires suffered the grievous loss of its Commanding Officer. Lieut.-Colonel Hicks had just previously taken over the brigade, following the death of the Brigadier, when he was severely wounded in action on May 8th.

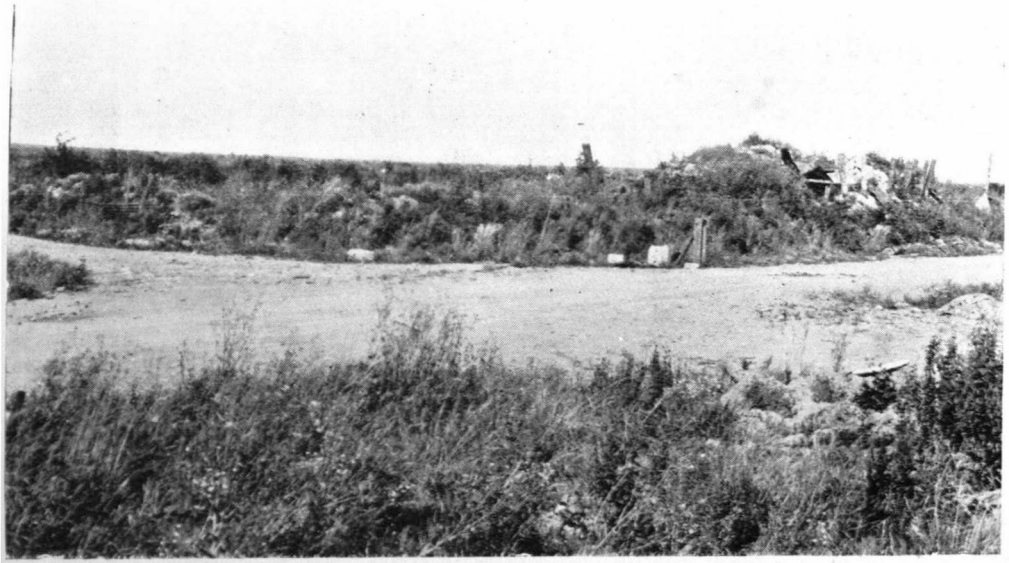
His wounds were very severe, and following amputation, enteric developed, and he died in hospital about a month later. His death was a very severe blow, for Colonel Hicks was a brilliant officer, with a long record of staff and regimental service; indeed, one of those who had been in close association with him said: "Not only did he save the Battalion; he saved the Second Army at Ypres." Another Hampshire officer wrote: "No Battalion ever sustained a greater loss than we did when Colonel Hicks was wounded. He was an ideal commanding officer, a great soldier, and a gallant gentleman." He had gone out at the beginning as second in command, succeeding to the command when Colonel Jackson was taken prisoner in the previous autumn. Colonel Hicks was succeeded in command of the battalion by Major the Hon. Lawrence Palk, D.S.O., who had won the Legion of Honour at Le Cateau.

The Hampshires' losses about this time —the surest test that the Battalion had been in it all the time—were heavier than those of any other corps except, perhaps, the Gordons and the Munsters. The Hampshires went out 1,200 strong, but killed, wounded, and missing, the Le Cateau and Ploegsteert battles had so diminished their ranks that as far as numbers were concerned the whole Battalion had to be more than replaced by draft. Some fortunate men there were who had passed through the fire unscathed, but the total casualty roll in April, 1915, was 2,700. There were always Hampshire drafts on the water to fill up the gaps. It was during the second battle of Ypres that the Hampshires had experience, not their first, perhaps, of a concerted attempt on the part of the Huns to deceive them. They had hardly taken up their position in the line as already mentioned when they had to meet an enemy charge, the leaders of which came upon them in the dawn yelling "Ve vos the Royal Fusiliers." The earlier experience, when the Hampshires lost a certain number of prisoners, had made them careful of this sort of thing, but apart from that they were scarcely likely to fall into a trap so clumsily fashioned, because the Royal Fusiliers were fighting close along side them.

They had their first experience of gas about this time; it was, in fact, a real gas battle. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has a reference to the 11th Brigade, and Hampshires, which provides the fullest proof of its dogged courage in the fight. "The 11th Brigade in that dark hour," he said, "showed to a supreme degree the historic qualities of British infantry. Their courage hardening as the times grew worse. Every point gained by the stubborn Germans was wrenched from them again by men more stubborn still. Severe attacks were made upon the trenches of the 1st Hampshires and the 5th London Rifle Brigade, but in each case the defenders held their line." Towards the end of the month they came out of the trenches about Ypres for a spell of rest, but before they did so the G.O.C. of the Division thanked the Regiment for the timely aid it had been able to offer at a critical point of the battle. The Corps Commander was also very congratulatory, and the Battalion list of mentions in dispatches or of those mentioned for war honour was a long and brilliant one. The Hampshire losses during that week of desperate endeavour to dam the rush were 11 officers and 330 men.

Perhaps the best picture of life in the salient is that contained in the Regimental Journal for June, 1915. It is as follows: "Zone of fire again—shell fire this time, and the real thing at last. We've just lost ten killed and wounded out of 26 officers in the Battalion, and about 15 or 20 per cent. of the men, mostly by shell fire. Very interesting, not to say exciting, experience. It's making men of us, I believe. We had just over a week of rest behind when we (our Battalion) had orders to be ready to put off at any moment Which we did the next morning, and trained along to behind the line further along. The Boches had been experimenting in poisonous gases on the weak spot between the French and ourselves, and the French disliked it intensely, so when they got back four miles to a certain canal they had to stop. But the Canadians close on the edge of the French were bothered. They had to double the length of their line, and pivot it back on one end. And then the Boches, who had been massing artillery very strongly, gave them proper hell for three days before we came to relieve them. Not so bad for the British, as they like to be called. . . . Well, we have done our job here: with no support at all from the artillery, we have stuck it out on a rather important piece of line under pretty heavy shelling, and helped to patch up a bad botch. Whether the Germans will use asphyxiating gases on us again I don't know."

A short rest followed, but they were soon at it again, and back in the salient at that. In June they were quite close to the town of Ypres. In the intervals of the heavy shelling they could look out upon its dreadful desolation. In a letter home an officer of the Hampshires wrote: "Of all the absolutely unspeakable places commend me to the Ypres salient. Ypres itself is like Pompeii without the tourists All around are stinks of dead men and horses. One is shelled every day of one's life. We went into the salient 1,040 strong; in three months we had lost 737 in killed, lost, and wounded." And yet Colonel Palk once said, speaking of the same place, 'The front is the finest health resort in the world.'"



The remains of the Estaminet du Commerce at La Gheer.

(By courtesy of the Editor of the Hampshire Regimental Journal).

CHAPTER VII.—The Gap. 1st Battalion

Here is a little picture of trench work as seen by one of the rank and file. I am again indebted to the Regimental records for it. "We held a certain trench for nine days, and I don't think I am overdoing it when I say we had, on an average, quite 1,000 shells per day hurled at us. At last we had the order to leave the position, and had a four days' rest. The Tigers had 'copped it,' and no mistake, but during these four days the lads were singing and playing mouth organs as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. One morning the Germans attacked us, and got to close quarters. Some of our chaps had to finish the job with shovels, because their rifles were out of order, owing to so much sand getting on the bolts, but we gave them all they wanted, and we did not lose our trench. We don't see much in the papers about the Hampshires, but we have been in the thick of it, and we are 'all there' when the time comes to do our bit." Now and again their task was varied by an attack. One was made on the German trenches at Pilkem.

The Commander-in-Chief inspected them upon one occasion to express his warm appreciation of the work of the Division, of which the Hampshires formed a part, from the detraining at Le Cateau until the close of the battle of Ypres. He made a special reference to the part of the 11th Brigade in filling the historic gap. "The enemy effected a very big surprise," he said, "and managed to tear away about five miles of trenches in a very short space of time. A surprise is really a very difficult thing to achieve, but in this case it was anything but a credible performance. Against his sworn word, he used those poisonous gases, contrary to all rules of war. If you were put in a trench which appeared impossible, it was because for the moment it was not possible to put you in a trench which provided adequate protection against such a heavy fire as was directed on us at the time. The wonderful thing is that we were able to keep the salient, and had it not been for the gallantry shown by the leaders and the men, that would not have been the case, and we should probably be turned out of our positions all along the line. But owing to your magnificent behaviour and magnificent gallantry, this was not so."

General Plumer also made an inspection of the Brigade in saying "good-bye" to that Army. "I want you to understand," he said, "that I appreciate most thoroughly the part which you, as a Brigade, have taken in it. Though it sometimes happens that individual Battalions are not mentioned in despatches, it does not follow that their work is not appreciated by all of us who have had you under our command. It is entirely owing to the work that had been done by the troops in this area that we have been able to maintain the positions acquired, and in fact to improve them. It was a strenuous and splendid achievement, and will go down in history as one of the great battles of the war. The 11th Brigade has finished up the period in the salient with a most successful engagement—I mean the one which took place on 6th July. Most of you will know that in comparison with other campaigns, even minor operations in this war are operations of great magnitude, and those who took part in the action on July 6th were engaged in an important battle, which will stand in the history of the world as a complete success. I can truly say that none could have done better than this Brigade. Your commanding officer has every good reason to be proud of you."

During part of the summer the Brigade was in occupation of trenches at Hooge, which was the scene of violent bomb fighting, and not a few of those trench rushes in which the Huns specialised about that time.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Fog of War. 1st Battalion

In late '15 and early '16 the veil began to descend upon the fighting units, and within a few months the Hampshires were utterly swallowed in the fog of war. At first, when the Hampshire Regiment was represented on service by the two regular Battalions—one in France and one in the East—differentiation was a simple matter, but there came a time when the authorities, for reasons connected with keeping secret the British order of battle, dropped a curtain over Battalion numbers, and even after a while over the names of regiments. The practice of describing the Hampshires, for instance, as a Southern County Regiment, leaves the chronicler in a good deal of difficulty in seeking to pick out the exact relation of perhaps half a dozen Battalions to a particular movement.

Roughly the situation at that time was something like this: The 1st Battalion was in Northern France during the early part of the war; the 2nd saw its first service at Gallipoli, but subsequently reached France in time for the terrific battles in the middle of 1916; the 8th Territorials were after their participation in the Gallipoli fighting sent to Egypt, and later took part in the Palestine campaign; the 10th was at the Dardanelles in the latter part of the fighting, and went with the 12th Battalion subsequently to Salonika. Nearly all of the Territorial Battalions were concerned in the Eastern fighting the first to go into action in Mesopotamia being the 1/4th Battalion. The 11th, a Pioneer Battalion, and the later formations of Service Battalions, went to France, and they were joined there quite late in the war by the 2/4th, the only Hampshire Territorial Battalion, apart of course from Territorial troops of other arms raised in the county, which saw service in France as a whole. In all in 1916 there were five Battalions in France, while the Hampshire Yeomanry—Territorial troops, but not raised as a unit of the County Regiment—were subsequently attached as a body to a Service Battalion—the 15th—and served with it as infantry.

It will be seen, therefore, that the only possible way of securing the proper allocation of credit will be to deal with the fighting in France from, at all events, the beginning of 1916 with the Hampshire Regiment as a whole. There are additional complications connected with the movement of Battalions from their Divisions, in order to reconstruct formations which had been heavily in action. This sort of thing, constantly necessary evidently, was never on record except in places to which the lay historian has no access. There is another interesting point while on this rapid survey of the situation, which was constantly in flux, and which changed in secret. It is interesting to notice that the Battalion frequently covered the ground which had been occupied earlier by another unit of the County Regiment. Arras provided an illustration of this in 1917, and later in the same year there was a Battalion of the Hampshires billeted in a village which had been captured earlier by another Battalion, as the burial ground showed. Once it happened that three Hampshire Battalions (withdrawn from the line about the same time) were in close touch. They were the 1st, 2nd, and 14th, and in the leisure of billets they were sufficiently close to one another to foregather and fight their battles over again.

CHAPTER IX.

"The Best Trench in Flanders." 1st Battalion

The record of the Hampshires from Ypres to the Somme—the period of stationary warfare — corresponds pretty closely to the lines of the general war story of that time. The daily records of the war correspondents were of small value to anyone attempting to keep in touch with the constant movements of five Battalions. Indeed there was a tendency for all units to lose their individuality somewhat. The regimental records, the log as it were, contained the details, but that of course is little more than a table of dates and place-names. Glimpses are available of course of the minutiæ of the Hampshires' experience, but they only help in small degree towards the building up of the picture. There was the alternation of the dreariest of trench routine and billets, varied sometimes by trench digging in the rear and the elaborate preparations which at that stage of the fighting were regarded as necessary to the various shows. Also there was the constant revolution of the machinery which the far-seeing General Headquarters installed for keeping men in trench and billets fit for the more serious portions of their work and happy all the time.

During their spells in the trenches the Hampshires made the best of their dug-outs and of their meagre candle ration, and they wrote home concerning the excitements of life in their quaintly-named but narrow homes. Like the others, they took part in their turn in eerie patrol work between the lines, in covering working parties, and occasionally had the thrill of a trench raid, showing in this latter regard the same fine qualities of adaptability and resource as they did in the desperate experiences of the salient, and earlier still in the streets of Le Cateau. As Sir Philip Gibbs once wrote concerning the passage of those weary days: "The men cultivated cheerfulness as the first law of daily life, and they succeeded wonderfully in spite

of filthy trenches, and ice-cold water. . . Many of them found a gruesome humour in all this, laughing at death. . . 'You know, sir,' said a sergeant, 'it does not do to take this war too seriously.' . . . The most popular man in a platoon was the fellow who could twist a joke out of a dead German, or the subaltern who could lead his patrol into No Man's Land with the men chuckling over some whimsical word about his widow."

Then there was always the work of trench repairing. Hampshire Battalions were dotted all along the line, their positions varied from week to week, but there were few things to enliven the dreadful monotony of it. There was an occasional flash of the old order of fighting, like Festubert, Neuve Chapelle, Wychtschœte, Loos, and St. Eloi. But for the most part the days were made up of small happenings, small that is from the standpoint of men who were constantly under fire, constantly cheek by jowl with death, regularly soaked by the rain and shrivelled by the biting wind.

Here are extracts from letters published in the Regimental Journal, which give a fair idea of the uneven tenor of those days. "The Boches are rather misbehaving themselves to-day. (This was at Fonquevilliers). Their advance guns are playing up and down the line, and one never knows where they are going to next. . . . It has been raining heavily all day, and the trenches and communication trenches are a sea of mud. It is that yellow, sticky sort, and in places it reaches to one's knees. The trenches held by 'A' Company (this is a record of the 1st Battallion) are the worst, and they are nearest the Germans. 'B' Company lives in dug-outs in Snipers' Square. Roberts'-avenue is pretty bad; Red Nose-avenue is much worse, and is falling in. The condition of Crawl Boys'-lane is beyond description."

And so it goes on—officers and men wounded by snipers or chance bits of H.E. shells; leave and returning from leave; football matches in the rear; the presentation of cups and trophies by Divisional Generals; and the rest of the common round of stationary war. But the time was not being wasted, though it had all the appearance of stalemate. All the time there went on relentless preparations for "The Day" of the big push of 1916. The Germans did not know it, indeed the routine was kept up in all its detail in order that they should not. It was the Hunnish supposition that we were as tired of trench warfare as they were. The preparation for the Somme was a wonderfully kept secret. The general plan of the Somme operations, as most people will remember, was to keep the German High Command busy, in order to relieve the pressure upon Russia, and to win what was possible in the way of French territory, either by nibbling on a bigger scale than had hitherto been employed, or, if luck went that way, by a break through.

There are some letters in the Regimental Journal sent by various officers, either to the editor or their friends, which give an admirable picture of the trench life of the Hampshires, according to the point of view of the writers. They very largely deal, of course, with the coming and going of members of the 1st Battalion establishment, but here and there are vivid little glimpses of life in the trenches. Thus: "We are expecting to shift our quarters very shortly, and are in a state of readiness to move. Of course, we are very sorry. We have put in a lot of work here in the four months we have been in these trenches, and we are proud of it. Not only have we made what is generally recognised as one of the best trenches in all Flanders, but we have done a great deal to make ourselves comfortable as well as safe, and collected a mass of small luxuries, which we shall have to leave behind. The history of the Hampshire trench would be well worth relating in full. It was dug at the end of dry weather, like dozens of others, just where the troops lay in the course of heavy fighting, and naturally drainage considerations were not counted. Then a part of it was captured by the enemy, and then the rain came. When we took it over in early November it was in a dreadful state, and with the incessant rain it got worse and worse, and at one time it was a question whether we could continue to hold it at all. And on December 19th it was very badly knocked about. The Christmas truce just gave us the chance of serious rebuilding, and in the course of the next two months it was rebuilt from end to end, rivetted, drained, and floored.

Something like 30,000 sandbags have gone into it, and tons of timber. And all this work was done by night, and more or less under fire. By the end of February it was the show trench of the neighbourhood, and visitors were brought in to admire and imitate. But the actual fire trench was only a small part of the work. Sleeping accommodation for the whole garrison was built, some of the dug-outs being big enough to take tables and chairs, communication trenches had to be

made and drained until the main trench could be reached in daylight, breastworks were built in series in the wood, plank paths constructed and laid for thousands of yards over the mud; wire obstacles made and re-made in front and behind the trenches; houses placed in a state of defence, drains dug, and huts and shelters built wherever wanted. From all we hear there is little done in most trenches to compare with our work. We still hear of men standing in water up to their knees, of trenches without shelters for the men, and without any approaches that can be used in daylight. In fact we are convinced any move must be a move to worse quarters. . . ."

In June, 1915, the Hampshires were in the neighbourhood of Boesinghe taking trench turns with the East Lancashires. They were constantly under fire while in the Ypres area.

CHAPTER X.—The Somme. 1st Battalion

As the years go by, the unexciting business of preparation for big shows and of the ordinary trench routine—the ever lurking death and horror without thrill—will fade a little, except of course to those who bore their share in the work. The actual battle records of the armies will crystalise and group themselves like jewels in the drab setting of the general story of the war. Mons, the Marne, the Aisne, Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Verdun, the Somme, and Cambrai, looked at from a distance, will seem like a skeleton of the war story. They will be landmarks in the future years. None of course are battles in the sense that Waterloo was a battle, and in many cases they spread themselves over months of time, and were sometimes indistinguishable from the trench warfare which preceded them, and into which they sank again.

One finds as one proceeds with this story of the Hampshire's part in those long drawn-out engagements, that the only possible method is to regard them as a whole and try to pick up the story of the five battalions which took part, here and there. The intensive preparation of the Somme fighting is shrouded in mystery still. We knew that five Hampshire battalions went into the mist which hung like a dense curtain between us and all knowledge of the doings of our own men. We knew that the 1st battalion was in France, and being a corps de'elite, would we were sure, be in the big push. The 2nd battalion reached France from the Dardanelles towards the end of 1915 or in the early months of the following year. The 11th—a new army formation—arrived in December, '15, and the 15th, one of the Portsmouth battalions came later. Others followed to France as they were formed and trained.

In other respects than in its relation to the Hampshire's records, the Somme was a fixed point in the war, and perhaps it would be well to summarise the result of would be well to summarise the result of it in the words of Mr. Phillip Gibbs: "Our troops broke through positions which the enemy believed, and had the right to believe, impregnable; carried by assault his first, second, and third system of trenches; drew in his reserves with many guns and men from Verdun, so that the French could counter-attack with brilliant success, and inflicted upon the enemy heavy and irreparable loss, which, as we hope and believe, though with imperfect knowledge (this was written before the results of the battle could be measured), that he could not afford without weakening his line of defence."

The fighting went on, as everybody remembers, for several months, until stopped by weather, which turned the whole terrain into a swamp. The Somme fighting will be for ever memorable because of the part which the Tanks played in terrifying the enemy, in routing out machine gun nests, and in inspiring our own men with hope and joy and laughter.

The Somme operations, lasting as they did from July 1st, 1916, until November, were one engagement. The 4th Division was part of the 8th Corps under General Hunter Weston, who commanded a brigade of the Hampshires earlier in the war, and afterwards fought with the 29th Division at Gallipoli. The front of the corps on the Somme extended from Hebuterne in the north down to a point north of the Ancre.

Beaumont-Hamel was the centre of the line. The 1st Battalion took part in the 20-mile attack on July 1st, their position being opposite Beaumont-Hamel. Mr. Edward Wright, in "The Great War," gives an admirable picture of the enormous difficulty which faced the attacking troops at this strong-

hold. He says: "Rising to a height of about two hundred feet above the valley of the Ancre, and connecting with the neighbouring hamlet of Beaucourt, lying on a plateau directly above the ravine of the brook, Beaumont-Hamel was the most formidable of all the German fortresses. Its underground system, elaborated in the easily-worked chalk, was superior in strength to that of the Thiepval on the other side of the Ancre ravine. Wave after wave of the finest flower of British valour broke against the burrowed rampart above the Ancre brook. The Germans on the height brought their trench mortars into action as soon as the British guns lifted, showing that no vital damage had been done by the long and heavy bombardment. Then, through the German barrage and the rake of machine-gun fire, the English and Irish troops and the Newfoundland Regiment made an immortal attempt to achieve a great victory against all odds. . . Some of the leading battalions suffered heavily, for the enemy's gun-fire continued to rake them from the left, the enemy's machine-guns enfiladed them from a village on their right. Nevertheless, battalion after battalion walked out of the wood of death, and then going forward at the double. . . . and made one of the most glorious charges to the death in history." There was a reference in "The Times" to the capture of this place and of the Hampshire's part in it. " . . . Though the attack north of the Ancre did not result in permanent gains such as those which have crowned our arms south of the river, the story of what was done there in the first days of the offensive is such that, when it is fully told, Great Britain, as our special correspondent at British Headquarters said as early as July 5th, may perhaps be even prouder of the deeds of the regiments which fought on this section of the front, and which achieved there some things of plain impossibility than of the successes further south.

"All the region by Serre and Beaumont-Hamel to Thiepval is extremely difficult—a country of swelling ridge and intervening valley, the dominating points being roughly at, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, these three places. Each was a position of great natural strength, and in the nearly two years during which they had been held by the Germans each had been fortified, both on and below ground, until the enemy seemed to have justification for his boast that they were impregnable. Yet in the first rush of July 1st some of our troops actually penetrated into and beyond Thiepval, Territorials actually reached and for a time held Serre, and other contingents fought through and over the successive German trenches of the first line system, until they were on the highest point of the plateau between Serre and Beaumont-Hamel. These objectives were reached about an hour or an hour and a half after the attack was begun. 'It may be doubted,' wrote our special correspondent of these events, 'if the world ever saw an hour of more heroic work than our men did there.'"

But, in spite of the utmost gallantry, our men could not retain their hold on Serre, or complete it on Beaumont-Hamel, where they held positions on both sides of the village.

The 11th Brigade—General Prowse's command, and of which the 1st Hampshires were a part—had as their ultimate objective the Serre Grandecourt Ridge. The method of attack was in the extended formation of companies, one wave being sent after another. The assault on the ridge contained the most terrific fighting in which the Hampshires had up to then taken part. The Brigadier was killed, and the Hampshires sustained grievous loss in the death of their commander, Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. Lawrence Palk. The Somersets, the Warwicks, the Seaforths, and East Lancashires also lost their colonels in the great attack. Indeed at its completion, successful though it was, there were only two battalions in the Division intact. Colonel Palk had been in it from the beginning, and was not only a magnificent soldier, but was very dearly loved by every man in the battalion. He had served in the 8th Hussars as a trooper, so keen was he in his younger days for a soldier's life. He had been with the battalion right from Le Cateau to the Somme, and had been in the habit of leading his men to the attack carrying only a walking-stick. The Hampshires' losses in other ranks in this fighting were exceedingly heavy, but according to one writer who came through the bitter ordeal, "not a man turned back, though it was certain death."

CHAPTER XI.

The Somme and after. 2nd and 14th Battalions

The 2nd Battalion, fighting with the 88th Brigade, were associated in the Somme fighting with the 1st Essex, 4th Worcesters, and the Newfoundlanders. Their position was a little to the south-west, but the 1st and 2nd Battalions were in adjoining Divisions. In the great attack the Hampshire 2nd Battalion was in reserve. The task of the 29th Division in the first days of the Somme fighting was afterwards recognised as an almost impossible one, but the valour of the troops engaged was unequalled in the whole course of the war.

The 14th Hampshires, one of the service formations, was very heavily involved in what may be called the middle stage of the great battle. The Battalion trained intensively for its first action in the Somme battle, spending three weeks at the task. They "went over" at dawn early in September, the objective being the heights above Hamel, a position which was regarded as almost impregnable. They were launched in three waves, these gallant Hampshire men of the first hundred thousand, and were met by the fiercest kind of resistance. Officers paid heavy toll to the enemy's snipers. Few, indeed, reached their objective, for the Huns put up a perfectly murderous fire with machine-guns, and his creeping barrage was a fearful thing. The Battalion was very badly mauled and was sent back for re-fitting.

The 14th Battalion also had a gruelling time in the terrific fighting at Schwaben Redoubt, where, following a perfectly amazing bombardment, the British troops swept from one end of the village to another and beyond to a new objective. The Hampshires were also very heavily counter-attacked near Thiepval—a key position to the right of Beaumont-Hamel. The enemy tried to bomb the attackers out of the vital positions that they had won, but with success that was only negligible. It must have been this fighting that was in the mind of an officer who was attached to a Colonial Division when as a Hampshire man he offered tribute in the columns of the "Hampshire Observer." He says: ". . . One day the Hampshires were on the left of our Division. They had to take an exceptionally strong position. The enemy knew that with this position once taken the way was open for more extended operations that would enable us to advance on a wide front and mop their whole line at that point. Therefore they concentrated all their strength and energy in holding that position. The Hampshires got the word to go over. As soon as they showed themselves they were met with a devastating fire from all kinds of guns, and the nearer they got to their goal the heavier became the rain of machine-gun bullets. Hell is heaven compared to what the Hampshires had to face that day. Yet never a man faltered. Never once did the glorious line of khaki waver. It swept irrestibly onwards, rolled over the enemy parapet, and into their first-line trenches.

"Immediately the enemy brought up reserves. They tried to overwhelm the Hampshires. Hundreds of machine-guns were turned on. The captured trench was swept from all sides by a terrific fire. Infantry came up with bombs and liquid fire outfits. Some squirted the fire into the trenches until the Hampshires were moving about in a sea of flame. Others kept raining bombs on the Hampshire lads. Nothing could daunt them, however. They advanced beyond the first line, and charged their foes with the bayonets. The odds were heavily in favour of the Germans in point of numbers, but they weren't the match of the Hampshires for hard fighting; the whole German line was thrown back.

"Then the way was clear. Our line swept forward, swung round into the village, expanded right and left beyond, and the Germans were pushed completely out of a series of important positions that they had been two years consolidating. Our Division got a lot of praise. Some of it was well deserved, but there isn't a man in the Division but will tell you that it was the Hampshires who made our great success possible by their fine dash into the mouth of hell to snatch victory from the forces of the fiends.

"Another occasion when we had reason to be thankful to the Hampshires was when we were holding a newly-captured line, and the men of the regiment were the connecting link between us and the French, who were developing a new offensive to supplement ours. The enemy tried the dodge of putting the severest possible strain on our line at the weakest point, in the hope of causing it to snap,

and so driving a wedge between us and the French. The Hampshires were assailed with fury by greatly superior numbers of the enemy. The first attack penetrated to the trench held by the Hampshires. The latter were forced to give way temporarily, but quickly recovered. They charged the enemy with the bayonet, threw him out of the trenches, and never once was he able to enter again, in spite of all his efforts. The fight raged the whole of the night. Gas and flame and bombs were tried by the enemy, then massed machine-gun fire. But it was all useless against the fine spirit of the men of Hampshire. During the succeeding day the enemy drew off."

The attack and counter-attack at Thiepval will stand out in the record of that amazing time very prominently. "Magnificent!" said a French officer. "My God, you men are fine!" Nothing stopped them; they went through barrages as though they were summer rain. They faced machine-gun fire of an incredible sort without flinching, and in spite of the hammering which they suffered they held every yard which they won. It was at Flers, where the 14th Battalion captured the Tea support trench, and fought with the casual confidence which became the hall-mark of Hampshire, that the tanks shone in their greatest glory. It was there that a Tank pressed right through the village swept by machine-gun fire, and followed by cheering troops, bearing the famous placard "Great Hun Defeat. Special."

The same Battalion was at Ypres in the November of that year, and fought at St. Julien, at Mount Cockeril, where the headquarters' staff was heavily strafed by an unlucky bomb, which caused several deaths of important officers, near the Menin road and at Roulers, and later at the Tower Hamlets position of terrible memory.

CHAPTER XII. "The Butchers."

When the prolonged fighting on the Somme and beyond, all of which for the sake of convenience may be called the Battles of the Somme, died away, considerable rearrangements of the British line took place. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says in his book that the winter which followed was spent by the British and by the enemy in licking their wounds. True, of course, but the Britisher does more than lick his wounds when he has received a pounding: he makes early preparations for the next round, with the thought at the back of his mind that he will have a more effective guard next time.

Reinforcements poured into France during the quiet months, and before the campaigning season began again in the following spring the line was very considerably extended, the Army Commanders, in the order in which they were placed from Ypres down to the union with the French, being Generals Plumer, Horne, Allenby, Gough, and Rawlinson. It was heavy and anxious Staff work, this lengthening of the line. And disposing afresh of forces none too numerous for the task which lay ahead when the weather settled down again to something which would make campaigning possible, but it did not occupy the whole of the time of the Army.

There were constant trench raids in the form which the enemy hated so thoroughly, and a great deal of 'tween trench work. It served the double purpose of keeping the Boche on edge—his nerves were none too steady when the fighting on the Ancre came to an end—and of gaining information concerning his strength and his ideas for the future. There was the tremendous complication too of the German retreat from the Somme, which, according to the information available at the time, might have been the beginning of the enemy collapse, or equally a feint. The Hampshires took their part in in this deadly and sometimes monotonous business, winning their due share of death and terrible wounds, and occasional mentions and decorations. Back and fro they went from trench to billets, fighting and resting, resting and fighting, with no more definite change save the occasional home leave which came the way of all ranks at long last.

Arras was the first big battle of the new fighting season, and the Hampshires were in it in force. The object of the big attack was to indent the German line between Arras and Lens, over intensely difficult country. The operation was also

designed to occupy as many German divisions as possible, while the French pressed the big offensive which General Nivelle planned. Sir Philip Gibbs called it "doing team work" for the French. It was bitter and long drawn out, and as everyone knew when the operation began in April, it would have a vital influence on the course of the war. There was the usual concentration of heavy pieces, the usual bombardment of the Boche emplacements and wire, and then the heart-stirring attack over the mist-ridden, treacherous, and shellpocked nomansland. There was a battalion of the Hampshires in General Fergusson's Division (the 17th) on the banks of the Scarpe. Somersets and Riflemen were fighting alongside them in the 11th Brigade. One of their little "affairs" was the capture, with the help of Tanks, of the Harp, a vicious trench system so-called because of its shape. The capture of the famous Hyderabad redoubts was another task set them, and they did it with elan. The "Stonewallers" were as ready in business of that sort as they were stubborn in defence, and perhaps it was there that they won the other name by which in some quarters they became known—the Butchers. The Hampshiremen's marching had already won them one nickname—the Tigers—and it was only a day or two ago that a famous General, speaking of the Hampshires, one of the battalions of which had come under his command, said that there were none like them for marching. Generals of Division and others in the salient knew them for their powers of sticking to a job which seemed hopelessly lost, and in the little affair of the Hyderabad redoubt they developed to a still further degree the capacity of grasping an opportunity readily and holding it very firmly.

General Fergusson was able to greatly improve the position on the Scarpe bank which his Division held as the result of the movement, and his roll of prisoners was substantial, exceeding three thousand, but the army of which it formed part was held up by the very strongly defended chemical works. On the whole, however, they well maintained their line with the Canadians, who were storming Vimy Ridge to the left. That, of course, is no part of the Hampshire's story, brightly as it shone in the history of the early 1917 battles.

The result of this action, said Lord Haig in one despatch, was a gain more considerable than any which had attended our armies in the course of a single operation since the commencement of the offensive. It was the more remarkable because many of the troops employed were in action for the first time.

CHAPTER XIII. Monchy. 2nd Battalion

Thereafter, except for the grim business of holding on, the 1st Battalion dropped out of the picture for a bit. But the 2nd Battalion was at once "in." The Brigade, the 88th, was employed in the attack on Monchy, the 1st Battalion being attached to the Division (the 17th) which was guarding the flank of the movement.

There was some stubborn and thrilling fighting. The Essex and Newfoundland comrades of our county men caught it rather more heavily than the other units of the Brigade, the reason being that the chances of battle and the slower going of the troops on either hand isolated them. They paid very dearly for the measure of their success. A full Division of the enemy was thrown against the two battalions of the 88th Brigade. The Hampshires were brought up at once. They leapt into the battle in the hope of reaching their comrades and of stiffening the defence against an almost intolerable preponderance. As they swept forward they were caught by the field guns and the machine guns of the Boche and very badly cut up. They tried again, and yet again, facing the fiercest fire with that grim nonchalance which became the mark of the Hampshire men when they were thoroughly "up against it." As a battalion they were unable to break through the barrage, but one Company pierced the wall of bursting shells and the leaden hail of the machine guns, and helped to prevent the movement by which the enemy hoped to envelop the Newfoundlanders and the men from Essex. "They were terrible hours to endure," wrote Sir Philip Gibbs in the despatches which were afterwards published in his book dealing with the 1917 fighting," "From Bapaume to Passchendaele." "But our men held out nobly, and when the enemy made his counter-attacks in the afternoon and evening, ad-

vancing in waves with a most determined spirit, they were hosed with machine-gun bullets, and fell like grass before the sythe. . . .'

No one, who served with the 2nd Hampshires during that 1917 Eastertide, will ever forget Monchy, with its scores of dead horses that told of the tragedy of the cavalry who were caught in a snow storm and a shell storm at the same time. Right up to the end of May, when the 29th Division finally left the Arras sector for a well-earned rest, those who had survived the hottest days of the battle often gazed at the heights, crowned by that battered remnant of a village, that they had fought so bitterly for.

It was the greatest day of the devoted 88th Brigade in that year, and brought more glory to the splendid 29th Division, of which it formed a part. Afterwards the troops had the weather for an enemy. "The night," says Sir Philip Gibbs, "was dreadful for man and beast. Snow fell heavily, and was blown into deep drifts by wind as cold as ice. Wounded horses fell and died, and men lay in a white bed of snow in an agony of cold while shells burst round them."

The battle tide swung north again, drawing the 1st Battalion into the fury of the May fighting. General Berners, who had the 11th Brigade, was still waiting in front of the chemical works with the rest of the Division, and his task at the next attack was to seize the chateau, very strongly defended. He did it. The Hampshires had another heavy day, but they achieved their object.

Thereafter for a spell the battle flamed up and down the line, rising here and falling there, but never really ceasing. "Big shows" followed each other at diminishing intervals, and in between there was always the extremely bitter fighting which attended the straightening of the lines and the correction of awkward corners.

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CHAPTER XIV.—The Salient again. 2nd Battalion

For this detailed account of the third battle of Ypres I am indebted to Lieut. G. W. P. McLachlan, who was attached to the 2nd Hampshires during the 1917 fighting:

The long drawn out third battle of Ypres, which began on July 31st and continued until about the middle of October, will go down to history as one of the most glorious pages in the annals of the Hampshire Regiment. Most of the battalions in France at the time participated in one or more of the various engagements, the 1st, 2nd, 11th, 14th, and 15th Battalions all lending a hand in those three months of terrific fighting in the salient under terrible conditions. The battle opened on the 31st July with the crossing of the Yser Canal at Boesinghe by the Guards Division, during which show the 29th Division, in which were the 2nd Hampshires, were out of the line in reserve, bivouaced in woods just behind the heavy gun positions. Immediately afterwards, however, they relieved the Guards, and, taking it in turn by brigades, held the newly-captured ground. At this period, and, in fact, until almost the end of the month of August, the 29th Division was the left of the British line, with the exception of the few Divisions right upon the coast, and was in touch with the French troops on its left.

The 2nd Hampshires throughout August operated on the right of the Division, with their flank resting on the Ypres-Staden railway. Throughout the last three weeks of the month of June the battalion had been out at rest in the village of Fieffes, near Doullens, after finally leaving the Arras sector on the 5th June, and there had trained strenuously for the forthcoming operations in Belgium, so that the opening of the battle found them fit and ready for the job in hand.

Their turn came on the 16th August, after over a month of holding the line and working parties, trying enough jobs under any circumstances, but trebly so in the hated salient. The Division moved into the line on the night of the 14th, and about eight o'clock on the evening of the 15th they began to move cautiously up the duckboards to the crest of the last rise before the little river Steenbeek, which stream separated us from the Germans and Langemarck. From this point onwards, what with the terrible state of the ground, the pitch darkness of the night, the almost entire absence of recognisable landmarks, and the gas shells which the Bosches were putting over in considerable quantities, things became rather exciting, and the task of getting the thousands of men down to their appointed places on the banks of the Steen-

beck was extremely difficult. The M.O. of the 2nd Hampshires, Captain Knight, M.C., and one of the company commanders, Captain Day, had volunteered to go out the day before and lay strips of white bandages down from the battalion's forward positions to the stream, as a guide when assembling, but this job was undertaken by the Divisional Engineers.

One party of Sappers was late in starting to lay these tapes, with the result that one Company, X Company, under Lieut. Reid, which was to use the tape in question, caught them up. They therefore had to proceed very slowly behind the Sappers, a trying ordeal under the circumstances, especially with the ever-present thought that they might not reach the assembly place in time. Eventually the officers of this Company came to the conclusion that the tape was being laid in the wrong direction, and that they were going astray. The Engineers contended that they were right, but the Company Commander decided to trust to his own instinct and knowledge of the ground, and struck off on his own, with his Company behind him. He was proved right, for he reached the Steenbeck about 2 a.m. quite safely, whilst the Sappers were still laying tapes in the mud somewhere behind.

The stream, which was two or three yards wide and extremely muddy, had already been bridged in several places, and the troops to take the first objective crossed in silence and formed up on a tape on the other side. In the case of the 2nd Hampshires, there were W, on the left, and Y Companies; the remainder, Z behind W, and X behind Y, who were to take the second objective, remained on the near side; and behind them again was the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment, who were to take the third objective.

The first objective was the Widjendrift Road, which ran almost at right angles to the Ypres-Staden railway across the front; the second was an imaginary line, known as the Green Line, parrallel with the first objective and just east of Langemarck; whilst the final objective was the strongly fortified line known as the Red Line, which was part of the Gheluvelt line.

Punctually at 4.45 a.m. on the 16th, just as one was wondering if that really was the first grey tinge of dawn making the darkness visible, the chaotic noises of the night of waiting merged suddenly into the gigantic crash of the barrage, and at the same instant the whole of the 29th Division, the French on their left, the 20th Division on their right, and so on down the line southwards, dashed forward to the attack. It was early seen that that terrible enemy, Flanders mud, was going to spoil all previously practised formations. In a very short time the scene, if one could have stopped and studied it, resembled the vicinity of the Crystal Palace after the final for the English Cup. The fighting blood of the men was up. They streamed after the barrage, some even dodging through and outstripping it, eager for Huns to kill. Well up to schedule the first objective fell, and with it, in our sector, a formidable reinforced concrete redoubt known as Martin's Mill, from which place several hundred Germans surrendered.

On our right the 20th Division were not having such a good time, and Y Company, under the able leadership of Captain Day, who won the M.C. for his work, but was wounded in the hand a little later, swung round, assisted for a while by X Company, and formed a defensive flank to enable the K.O.Y.L.I. to come up and get into the village of Langemarck across the other side of the railway. Then, somewhat behind the barrage this time, Z and X Companies forged ahead to the second objective. X Company suffered rather heavily, having that nest of machine guns, Langemarck, on their immediate right. They emerged from the battle next day with two officers and exactly fifty other ranks still standing. Second-Lieutenant Brown was wounded on the Widjendrift road, and Second-Lieutenant Feather was shot through the head by a sniper soon afterwards.

The Company Commander, Second-Lieut. Reid, gained the M.C. for his capable handling of his Company under the trying conditions. The Green Line was successfully taken and consolidated, and then the Essex Regiment streamed through for the final line. In the words of one officer who came through, they had a "pukka field day, potting at Jerry with his own rifles," for their captured a large number of German rifles and considerable quantities of ammunition, which they used to save wasting their own.

By ten o'clock the time-table was complete. Every battalion in the Division was in position, as were the French on the left and the 20th Division on the right. Then came what was perhaps the worst of the whole show, the terrible shelling with which the Germans retaliated. The Essex in front suffered fairly severely, being in such a prominent and well-marked position, but the Z and X Companies of the Hampshires, although

"Plugstreet" Church and Cemetery.

(By courtesy of the Editor of the Hampshire Regimental Journal).

shelled continually, did not have many casualties, as their positions were right in the open in the middle of what had once been fields, and therefore difficult for the Germans to range on. W and Y Companies, behind on the Widjendrift road, however, suffered badly, and lost a considerable number of officers and men. Lieut. Pearce, who had taken over command of Y Company on Captain Day being wounded, was buried by shells and slightly gassed, and Second-Lieutenants Haddy and Pine were both mortally wounded. The doctor had established his dressing station at Martin's Mill, but "Jerry" evidently had the place well marked, and shelled it unmercifully all day long.

An incident which produced that spirit which was the saviour of many men's sanity in France, the spirit of laughter, occurred somewhere between the first and second objectives. Second-Lieutenant Anderson, of Z Company, was the hero. Getting ahead of his men, he tackled a small "pill-box" alone, and from it appeared one German. After a bit of a chase he wounded the German, and on going up to capture him in the approved style, was astonished when "Jerry" put his hand in his pocket, pulled out a photo of himself taken whilst training in Germany, and presented it to his captor!

The battalion was relieved in the early hours of the morning of the 17th, and limped and straggled thankfully back, mainly via the Divisional "Tea Shop" that had been established in some old German dug-outs on the canal bank at Boesinghe, to its "bivvies" near Elverdinghe.

The rest was short-lived, however, for forty-eight hours later the Division was again called in to hold the line it had taken. The Hampshires this time held the front line, which had been the "Red Line," in the neighbourhood of Japan House, on the near bank of the Broonbeck, and facing the village of Koekuit, on the borders of Houthulst Forest. During this spell, Lieut. D. Whitmarsh, of W Company, attached to Z Company, was unfortunately killed by a shell whilst getting his men into shelter. Captain Westmorland, who later became Lieutenant-Colonel and commanded the 2nd Battalion at the end of the war, was commanding Z Company at the time.

CHAPTER XV. The Menin Road and Langemarck. 1st, 11th and 14th Battalions

The 11th Battalion was also engaged in the battle on the 16th August, operating as pioneers with one of the Irish Divisions further south in the salient.

Later in the month the 14th Battalion "went over," one of their officers winning the V.C. for his gallant conduct in carrying on, leading his men to the attack after he had been wounded badly himself. He was Second-Lieutenant Montagu Shadworth Moore, and the official description of the act which won him the Cross, this being the third won in the war by the regiment, is in these words: It was awarded "for most conspicuous bravery in operations necessitating a fresh attack on a final objective which had not been captured. Second-Lieutenant Moore at once volunteered for this duty, and dashed forward at the head of some seventy men. They were met with heavy machine-gun fire from the flank, which caused severe casualties, with the result that he arrived at his objective—some five hundred yards on—with only a sergeant and four men. Nothing daunted, he at once bombed a large dug-out, and took 28 prisoners, two machine guns, and a light field gun. Gradually more officers and men arrived to the number of about sixty. His position was entirely isolated, as the troops on the right had not advanced, but he dug a trench and repelled attacks throughout the night. The next morning he was forced to retire a short distance. When opportunity offered he at once reoccupied his position, rearmed his men with enemy rifles and bombs, most of their's being smashed, and beat off more than one counter-attack. Second-Lieutenant Moore held this post under continual shell fire for thirty-six hours, until his force was reduced to ten men, out of six officers and 130 men who had started the operation. He eventually got away his wounded and withdrew under cover of a thick mist. As an example of dashing gallantry and cool determination," the account which appeared in the "Gazette" concludes, "this young officer's exploit would be difficult to surpass." Not a man in the regiment or among those who admire sustained

bravery of this sort will think that the official description is put a word higher than it ought to have been.

The 14th Battalion had in the whole of these operations an exceptionally difficult task. They were fighting (in the 118th Brigade) with the K.R.R.'s and London troops on the Menin road, or rather immediately to the south of it. It was desperate work, but it succeeded, and there was a substantial gain of prisoners and of important territory. Meantime the 1st Battalion (4th Division) was in action near Langemarck, Poelcapelle being the objective. The battalion held a very exposed position, and lost pretty heavily. A Scottish battalion and the East Lancashires, old comrades, came to their assistance, and a gap which contained great possibilities was patched. The weather at this time was perfectly appalling, but there was no possibility of following the practice of earlier fighting and settling down for the winter. The troops were in the swamps. They were overlooked, moreover, from Passchendaele Ridge and other contiguous heights. It was necessary from all points of view to press on, and the call which was made to the troops in this sense was thoroughly well responded to. It was a tremendous adventure though: the German positions were studded with pill-boxes—great concrete bastions, behind which and from under which machine gun-fire flamed and spurted. But adaptability was throughout the war the mark of the British fighting. Wood fighting earlier, and then the dreadful monotony of the trenches had been reduced to simplicity by that peculiar combination of solidity and resourcefulness which goes to the make up of British troops, whether they be old hands or citizen soldiery. Formidable as these pill-boxes were, one has it on the authority of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that the troops preferred them on the whole to fighting in trenches. It was possible to get round them for one thing, and the Boche surrounded is a different kind of person to the Boche lurking in a dug-out with a steel front-door and no way round to the back. Pill-box scrapping, the mentality of the contestants being what it was, could only have one end. There were losses of course from the deadly machine-gunning, but the enemy always gave in at the end, and crawled out with his hands stretched well above his ears. At one time hereabout the 1st and 2nd Battalions were out of the line at rest at the same time, and in close proximity, with the natural result, as Lieut. McLachlan recalls, that inter-battalion visitations were common. Dinner parties were given in turn by the officers in the impromptu messes—and "messes" they often were in that forlorn and desolate land of mud and shells—and the N.C.O.'s and men, especially the old campaigners who had served in both battalions, fraternised freely. The same thing occurred, at another time, between the 2nd and the 14th Battalions, the feeling between the Regular Battalion and the Service Battalion being wonderful, and typical of the excellent spirit of "camaraderie" existing in France.

CHAPTER XVI. Passchendaele. 2nd Battalion

On October 4th the 2nd Battalion again went into action, helping to capture the Abraham Heights on Passchendaele Ridge, this being the occasion on which our attack commenced just an hour before a projected German attack. Our men had to pass through the German barrage in their advance, but the plight of the enemy was terrible. All their troops, massed just behind the line for the offensive, were caught by our gunfire, and the toll of the slain was stupendous. The battalion did not get much rest at this time, for it went over the top again five days later, on October 9th, in an attack on Houthhulst Forest and Poelcappelle. In this affair the casualties were somewhat heavy, but more to the rank and file than to officers, peculiarly enough. On this day, also, Second-Lieutenant Scutt won the M.C. for conspicuous gallantry and for leading night patrols after the attack was over.

The state of the ground on this occasion was just as bad, if not worse, than it was on August 16th, but the objectives were taken and held. The 29th Division at the time was operating with the Guards Division, and their exact objective was somewhat to the left of Poelcappelle, and immediately in front of the line they had reached in August, so that once again they had to attack across a stream, this time the Broenbeek, and toil uphill to their objectives, which were in the neighbourhood of Cinq-Chemins Farm. Soon after this, almost the last of the en-

gagements of the third battle of Ypres, the Division left the line and moved down south out of Belgium to the Somme district for rest, reinforcements, and training.

In the meantime Passchendaele Ridge had been won, and the second longest battle of the war completed. Nothing, however, exceeded its bitterness. As the Field Marshal Commanding wrote: "The enemy had done his utmost to hold his ground, and in his endeavours to do so used up no less than 78 Divisions. . . . Despite the magnitude of his efforts, it was the immense natural difficulties, accentuated by the abnormally wet weather, rather than the enemy resistance, which limited our progress and prevented the complete capture of the ridge."

Stopping at this point for a moment, the story of the 1917 fighting can be crystalized into five great battles, six, if Cambrai can be called a double affair, as in fact it was. They were Arras, Messines, Langemarck, Passchendaele, and Cambrai. And Hampshire men were in them all.

CHAPTER XVII. Cambrai. 2nd Battalion

Cambrai, a tank battle, was one of the great occasions of the famous 29th Division, to which the 2nd Hampshires were still attached. The Battalion was concerned, in the advance, in the capture of Les Rues Vertes and part of Masnieres, and it was upon their Division that the full force of the German counter-blow fell. It was in the latter part of the battle that General de Lisle, at that time commanding the Division, was nearly captured. Towns and villages taken by the Division in the attack were lost again, re-won and lost yet again in the great enemy thrust which made the autumn and winter of that year for ever memorable; and through all the memories of that time, it seems to be generally agreed, by the observers, the stand of the 29th shines out with a glory nearly as full as that which belongs to the Division for its part in the Gallipoli beaches. I have been fortunate in getting a detailed story of the 2nd Hampshires' share in the battle from Lieut. McLachlan, before mentioned.

The battle of Cambrai, says Lieut. McLachlan, was an amazing battle, and not the least amazed were those who took part in it. The 29th Division was part of the "break-through army"; that is to say, theirs was not the job of storming the famous Hindenburg line, but they were to wait in our own old front line until other troops had proved that the Huns' boasts as to the impregnability of that line were empty ones, and then to dash on in pursuit and try to seize the crossings of the Scheldt Canal, preparatory to a cavalry advance and the occupation of Cambrai.

Before the show, the 2nd Hampshires were out at rest at a place called Bienvillers, close to the old front line of January, 1917; and here, it is interesting to note, they found the graves, in the remains of a tiny village called Hannescamps, of numbers of 1st Battalion men who had held this line in the early part of the year. The usual placid run of life in rest-billets went on for a week or so, until one night, early in November, the C.O., then Captain, acting Lt.-Col. K. A. Johnson, D.S.O., called a conference of all officers in the Headquarters billet. The fact that all officers had to go was quite sufficient to warn us that something was in the wind, but the daring scheme that was unfolded to us in that old French farmhouse made us look at each other and whistle loud and long. Then its glorious possibilities dawned on us, and the spirit of the man whose brain evolved the plan, seized us. All the Commanding Officers of the different Battalions in the Division, together with a few specially selected officers, journeyed by motor 'bus up to Peronne one day, and thence went up to the front line, around Gouzeaucourt and Villers Pluich, opposite the villages of Marcoing and Masnieres, from which point the attack would be made. At that time, I think, there was no part of the battle front that was so quiet. During a twelve-hour stay, we heard nothing but a few stray rifle shots; not a gun nor a machine-gun; although we were given to understand by the troops in the line that Jerry had a nasty habit of putting over "Minnies"

at night, which did considerable damage sometimes. At any rate, the neighbourhood, east of our lines, seemed much too peaceful to be part of a war, and augured well for our attack in a few days' time, for which complete surprise was the first essential.

Then followed three or four days of exceedingly strenuous training back in Bienvillers, first alone as a Battalion, then with the Brigade, and finally the whole Division practised the entire attack over ground which was remarkably similar to the real battle ground, roads being used to represent rivers and canals. Lord Haig was present to witness this dress rehearsal, as it really was, although none but the officers knew exactly what was going to happen.

Finally, on the morning of the 17th November, the Battalion marched out of billets and foot-slogged it as far as Boileau-au-Mont, reaching there about mid-day. Thence we entrained to Peronne, reaching that city of the dead very late at night. We immediately detrained and plodded wearily up a seemingly interminable hill to Moislains, where we arrived in the small hours of the morning. That day was spent in explaining to the men what the project in view was, and to everyone's delight, including the Brass Hats, one and all received the idea with acclamation. The daring and audacity of General Byng's idea fired the men's imaginations, and all difficulties and doubts, such as getting the guns, tanks, and troops, including the cavalry, to the scene of action, without the Germans getting to know of it, the possibility of an attack behind tanks with no barrage on the reputed strongest enemy line being a failure, all were swept aside by those glorious fellows who, with the true British sporting spirit, jumped at the chance of being in one of the most hazardous battles in history with the eagerness of schoolboys.

The next night was spent in a march to Sorel, close behind the line, the 19th being spent strictly under cover in camouflaged huts and ruins. Soon after midnight of the 19th—20th, the last stage was commenced, and, after passing through Gouzeaucourt, which was peopled with ghostly gunners and their guns, wierd shapes and noises that were the assembling tanks, and the shadows of multitudinous horses and men, the Battalion reached its starting point on the slopes behind the line between Gouzeaucourt and Villers Pluich. The rest of that night was spent in endless conjecture and anxiety, sitting in groups on the damp hill sides, wondering whether Jerry, who was very, very quiet over the way, really knew what was afoot, and whether he was waiting ready for us or not. At 6.20 a.m., on the 20th, the distant crest that marked the Hindenburg line sprang into a long line of leaping flame and smoke simultaneously with the crashing out of the bombardment that heralded the commencement of the great attack. For ten minutes we stood and watched and waited for the Germans' reply. It did not come. The surprise was complete. Now for our part of the show. Whistles sounded, and the men fell in. In column of route we marched down the slopes to the trenches that, in front of us, the Rifles and Light Infantry of the 20th Division had just left. We occupied the front line, and spent the next hour or so sitting on the parapet watching the wounded come back and gathering what news we could of them.

Just after 8 o'clock the unaccustomed sound of the "Advance" on the bugle came floating through the air, whereupon the Battalion left the trenches and got into artillery formation by companies. This meant that Y Coy. was in front, X Coy. were on the right, W Coy. on the left, and Z Coy. in the rear. The whole 88th Brigade was in similar formation of battalions, the 2nd Essex being in front, the 4th Worcesters on the right, the Newfoundlanders on the left, and the 2nd Hampshires in the rear. In this style, with companies in column of route, the men, with their rifles slung, and all smoking and joking, the advance over the old No Man's land was made. In order to get more easily through the gaps in the Bosche wire made by the tanks, the attacking troops then further split up into artillery formation by platoons.

Crossing the Hindenburg line, one could not help noticing how few were the traces of the fight. Here and there an abandoned German machine-gun, with hundreds of empty cartridge cases scattered around, but hardly a body to be seen.

After leaving the Hindenburg line behind, things began to wake up a little, and the efficacy of the few Boche anti-tank gunners who had not bolted was shown, for the countryside was literally dotted with flaming and smoking tanks, victims of direct hits. But opposition was very slight, although it was sufficient to somewhat break up the perfect attacking formation. The Worcesters were soon lost sight of on the right, and the Newfoundlanders on the left, with the result that when Les Rues Vertes, the objective

village on one side of the river and canal, was reached, the Essex and Hampshires were together and alone. From the other side of the river a "whizz-bang" battery opened up on Z and X Companies of the Hampshires, who were together on the forward slope of the last hill, but their elevation was too great, and the shells burst on the crest behind. Then Col. Johnson and the Adjutant (Capt. Lord) went forward to reconnoitre and, having found the best way into the village, were soon seen standing beneath the crucifix at the cross roads outside the village, waving and shouting for the Battalion to come on. This they did by companies, together with the Essex, and closely supported by the 88th Brigade M.G. Coy. and Trench Mortar Battery, and somewhere about mid-day the village was taken.

Then came the question of the crossing of the canal and river. Several tanks came meandering up the village street, to the intense amazement of the villagers, who were plying our waiting men with coffee and chocolate, a rather unique experience for the soldiers of 1917; but as the first tank was crossing the bridge, the Huns blew it up. Almost immediately afterwards the Fort Garry Horse, the leading troops of the Cavalry operating with us, came cantering along. That was a sight which no one who was there will ever forget. The street was lined with Hampshire men and Essex men, sheltering from the bullets which the Germans, only a few hundred yards away across the canal were firing, and drinking and laughing and chatting with the French villagers, who were too overjoyed at their unexpected deliverance to know fear; in the middle of the road were several tanks, in the shelter of which officers sat and ate chocolate and sandwiches the while they studied maps in readiness for the next move. Then suddenly there appeared these galloping cavalrymen, with their swords drawn. The frantic cheers that went up deadened the noise of battle, until the leading files were suddenly seen to swerve at the bridge, and turn, and the whole lot came galloping back. The bridge was down and the advance stopped.

The next move was by the Brigade-Major of the 88th Brigade, Captain McConnell, who seized a huge riderless cavalry horse, mounted, drew the cavalry sabre, and, calling to the nearest troops to follow him, led the way out to the right of the village across the marsh to look for a new crossing.

Those troops happened to be X Company of the 2nd Hampshires, under the command of Lieut. Henny. They dashed pell-mell across that half-mile of marsh, up to their knees, and often deeper, in mud and water, under fire the whole way, until they reached the shelter of the banks and pollard willows of the river Scheldt.

From the other side of the river came the voice of the commanding officer of the Worcesters, who by some means or other had got across first, and were over the other side on the right. He pointed out a wooden footbridge a little to our left, and by this means the company crossed the river. The next problem was to cross the canal. Here a Cavalry Major turned up with some prisoners, and with their aid a temporary plank bridge on top of a lock-gate was made, and in a few minutes we were across the canal. Messages were sent back to the battalion and brigade, and headquarters was established in the cottage of the keeper of the lock. Then, facing left, preparations were made to clear the Bosches out of Masnieres, the village on the Cambrai side of the canal.

Hereafter the fighting resolved itself into tiny combats. Village and house-to-house fighting must always be like this, and whilst it is quite good from the point of view of the participants, it gives the Staff an anxious time, for all semblance of order and formation is lost. An airman friend of mine, who was doing contact work with our Brigade in this show, told me afterwards that he spent the whole day trying to find out who was who in Masnieres, and that every time he flew back over any particular place he found different people in possession. First the Huns, then the British, then the Huns again, and so on, till he gave up the task in despair, and reported that Huns and Britishers were hopelessly mixed up in the village. All day long this sort of thing went on, and as fast as one party of the enemy were accounted for, fresh ones popped up from the labyrinth of cellars which spread under the village—some said even into Cambrai itself—four miles away.

CHAPTER XVIII. In the Marshes. 14th Battalion

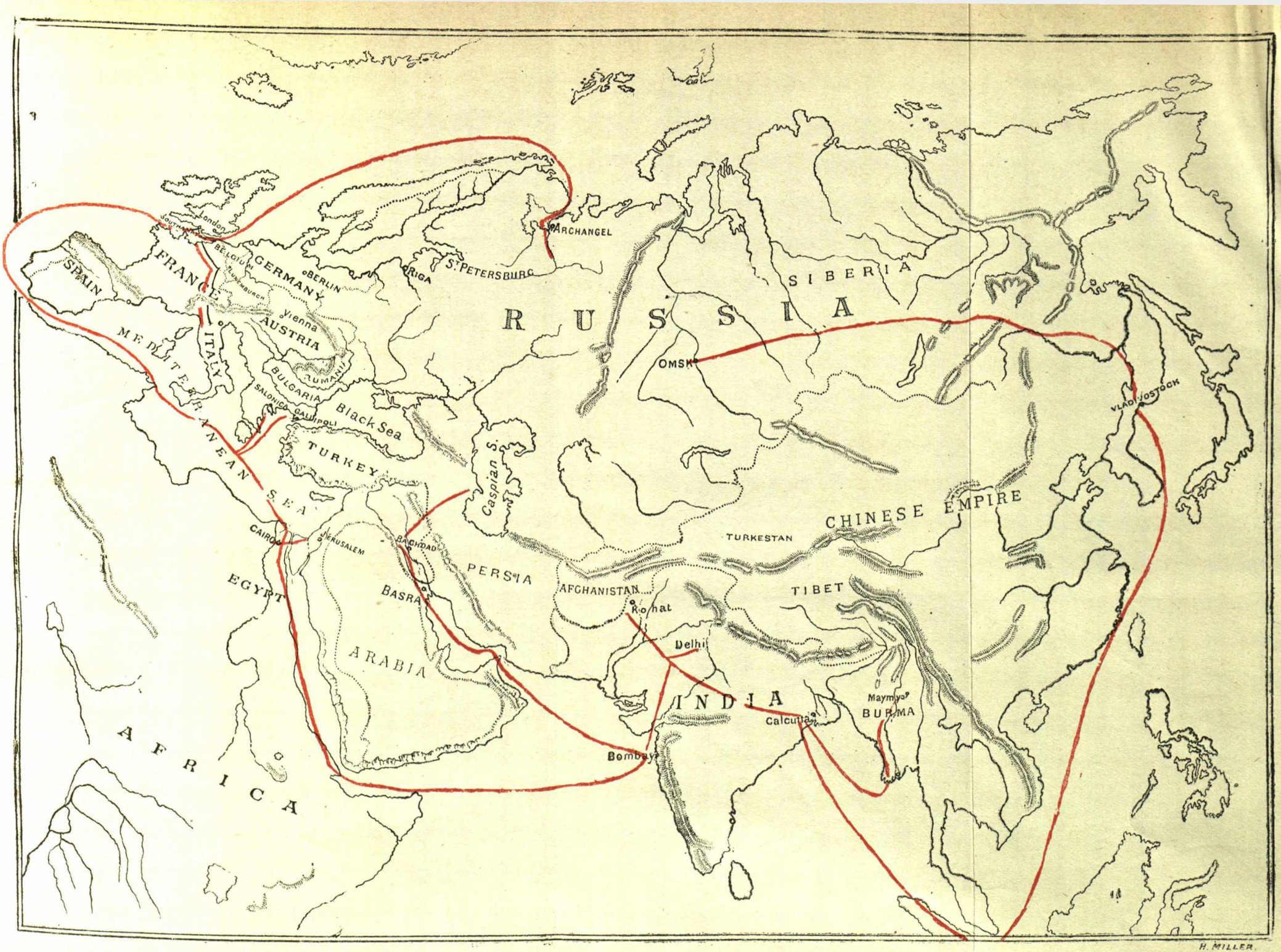
The late summer and early autumn of 1917 furnished the most thrilling fighting in the whole of the Hampshires battle roll. In two months two Victoria Crosses were won by members of the Regiment, bringing the war total up to three. The first, was won by Dallas Moore on the beaches of Gallipoli; in the fighting at Tower Hamlets, in the third battle of Ypres, the Cross was won by another officer of the same name, Second-Lieut. M. S. S. Moore—it is an odd coincidence that two out of the three should have been won by men of the same name—the third being that gained by 2nd Lieut. D. G. W. Hewitt. The latter was attached to the 14th Battalion, one of the service units which had won much glory and had the hardest possible gruelling at Swaben Redoubt. Second-Lieut. Hewitt, who belonged to a family held in the highest respect in Hampshire, was in command of a company on the day on which he won the Cross. When the Company's first objective had been captured (this was on July 31st, 1917, in the Ypres area), a further task was set them. While waiting for the barrage to lift, Lieut Hewitt was hit by a piece of shell, which exploded the signal lights in his haversack, and set fire to his equipment and clothes. Having extinguished the flames, in spite of his wound and the severe pain he was suffering, he led forward the Company under very heavy machine-gun fire, and captured and consolidated his objective. He was subsequently, unhappily, killed by a sniper whilst inspecting the consolidated line. "This gallant officer," says the official record, "set a magnificent example of coolness and contempt of danger to the whole Battalion, and it was due to his splendid leading that the final objective of the Battalion was gained."

The final year of the war, counting 1918 as the last, because the fighting ceased in the latter part of that year, although the signing of the peace took place a good many months afterwards, was the most remarkable in the Hampshires' record for a good many reasons. It was intensive fighting the whole time, very costly, very onerous, very exhausting, and yet, for the Hampshires, full of glory. The five battalions suffered like the rest from the German break through; like the rest, they went through the trying experience of regrouping, and they were ready and right in the front, for the attempt which was so rapidly made to turn the tide. They went forward with the flood, and like a flood they took part to the final crushing of the enemy. They hurled themselves gallantly against positions which were regarded as impossible of assault; their daily progress was sometimes a thing for other battalions to wonder at, for more than once a Hampshire battalion made 10,000 yards in a single day.

Sometimes in the later stages this was easy work; more often it was as hard as anything they had seen, and these were men who knew what the most bitter fighting of the war was like. It is a task of very great difficulty to keep track of all their movements. In April, anyhow, the 2nd Battalion was at Waton, and was under the very heaviest fire at Steenmerck. Indeed, following the capture of Neuve Eglise by the enemy, this unit was forced with other to withdraw, and had to dig in at Ballieul. Thereafter a period of heavy fighting in marshy and difficult country. From this they emerged finally at the end of April on relief by a famous French unit Unity of command was by this time a fact, and constantly the troops were intermingled both with the French and the Belgians. Later, a Hampshire battalion fought as part of the body of troops which the King of the Belgians commanded.

CHAPTER XIX.—Rheims. 2/4th and 2nd Battalions

The July fighting, in the neighbourhood of Rheims, brought great distinction to the 2/4th Hampshires. It had been in Mesopotamia, and had done well in the early fighting there, and later, on being sent to France, had been attached to the 62nd (West Riding) Division, which was under the command of General Braithwaite. He knew something of the Hampshires quality, for he was chief of staff to Sir Ian Hamilton at Gallipoli, and had seen them there. The story of the great battle west of Rheims cannot better be told than in the language which General Braithwaite used in a special order of the day. "The operations which commenced on July 20th were brought to a successful termination at midnight on July 30th. During the whole of this period the 62nd (West Riding)



Map of the War areas in which Regular, Service, and Territorial Battalions of the Hampshire Regiment served. The Red Lines indicate, not the actual routes, but approximately, the points at which the County Units were in the fighting line.

Division) has had continuous fighting, manœuvring and marching in new and unknown country, of a character entirely different from anything in which it has operated before during this campaign. Especially have the densely-wooded slopes of the Bois de Remis been a difficulty to troops unaccustomed to wood fighting. But neither the difficulty of the country, nor the determined and bitter resistance of the enemy, have militated against the victorious operations of the Division. The Division made a great name for itself at the battle of Cambrai. It enhanced that reputation at Bucquoy, where it withstood the attacks of some of the best German troops, up to that time flushed with success. It has, in this great battle, set the seal on its already established reputation as a fighting force of the first quality.

"During the period it has been fighting with its comrades of the French Army, and side by side with the 51st (Highland) Division, has utterly defeated the 123rd German Division, which had to be withdrawn on the 22nd inst., and the 50th German Division (an assault division of the first rank) shared a similar fate a few days later. The fortitude, valour, and steadfastness of all ranks has been beyond praise.

"Manfaux, Quitron, Bouilly, the clearing the Bois du Petit Champ, attest your gallantry; while Espilly, Nappes, the advance up the Arde Valley, and the capture of Bligny and the Montagne de Bligny are evidence of your sustained valour. To every officer, warrant officer, N.C.O., and soldier, I tender my grateful thanks, and express my unstinted admiration of their victorious efforts. They have gloriously upheld the highest traditions of the British Army.

"It is with intense pride that once again after a great victory I have the honour to sign myself as Commander of the 62nd (West Riding) Division."

The Chairman of the County Territorial Association received a letter just afterwards from General Braithwaite, in the course of which he said that the Hampshire Battalion only joined the Division just previously, "and it speaks volumes for its efficiency and soldierly spirit that they were able in a great battle such as this, new to all French conditions and inexperienced in Continental warfare, to so worthily uphold the best traditions of the Hampshire Regiment." The Hampshires were among the troops of the victorious Rheims Army, which marched past General Berthelot subsequently, and it is on record that they particularly distinguished themselves by their soldierly bearing and perfect marching.

Havrincourt and Maurincourt are also place names of great meaning in the fighting record of the 2/4th Hampshires. They took a brilliant part in the advance on the first-named place, pressing through to the reserve German line. There the fiercest kind of bayonet work awaited them, but they went on and through, with the aid of the tanks, to Graincourt. The machine-gunning reached an extraordinary pitch in this engagement, being responsible for an immense number of casualties. Also, of course, it was a circumstance which provided opportunities, the display of personal courage. The attack on the village of Havrincourt was held up for some time, owing to the flail of a well-placed machine-gun. A party of Hampshires, with a Captain at their head, threw itself right on to the German gun crew, shooting the leading man and capturing the rest, together with the gun. They had a lot of that sort of thing to do, and they were generally desperate adventures. Sometimes they came off, these almost forlorn hopes, and sometimes they did not. But in the end the menace was swept away, and the attack went on. Many young officers had their great chance on that day in mid-September. One, with a platoon of Hampshires, captured two machine-guns, an officer and twenty men, and establishing itself well beyond a village, repulsed a counter-attack which would have greatly bothered the attacking troops. Another helped to reorganise the troops in the confused street fighting which marked the taking of Havrincourt, pressing indeed right through the village and bringing off a good many captures.

I am able fortunately, as the result of the trouble taken by an officer who served with two Battalions of the County Regiment, including the 2nd Battalion, during a considerable portion of the great drive of the early autumn of 1918, to give the story of that Battalion's share in an historic operation in some detail. The 2nd Battalion took part in six big fights between August and October of that year, being during the whole of the time on the Flanders front, and for some time part of the composite corps which the King of the Belgians commanded. The big shows were those of Outtersteene Ridge, Hill 63, the big push from Ypres, the movement from Gheuvelt, and the move forward in the region of Ledegem.

The fight for Hill 63 was one of the biggest; in some respects it was the most remarkable battle in the later stages of

the war. The Hampshires took up their positions just before the advance on what was known as G.H.Q. line, being still attached to the 29th Division (88th Bgde). This was at the beginning of September. In preparation for the jump the Battalion took up its station in positions three or four hundred yards in front of the G.H.Q. line, it having been the practice at this time for troops with orders to move forward to take up posts such as this overnight ready for the final jump at dawn. At 5.15 the Battalion moved off behind one of the finest barrages ever put down —it was perfect in its accuracy and overwhelming in its effect. It crushed everything; blotted out the wire and the frontal positions of the enemy. "It was the finest thing I have ever seen," said the officer I am quoting, and he was a man with a very varied experience of barrages from the moment when that mighty engine of warfare began to develop.

As a consequence the Hampshires and the other Battalions of the Brigade got through the wire and beyond without very heavy loss. In their movement towards Hill 63 the Hampshire men had the Leinsters on the right and a formation of the 9th (Scottish) Division on the left. These determined men, walking or running behind that barrage, helped the enemy to make up its mind in a curiously collective way. They came running forward in batches, some with their hands well up, and others with hands laden with the gifts which it was their custom to bestow upon their captors. There was indeed very little fight left in them. Not all. Some from the shelter of pill boxes kept up a steady and harrowing machine gun fire which did a good deal of damage at first. Such were dealt with by the simple method of flanking them and treating them after the manner of hornets. The hill, too, was steep and was covered with trees and scrub. But it was completely won in good time, and from its summit the Hampshires could see the land which they were about to possess.

It was a kind of Pisgah in the advance, for right ahead was a Belgium which had not been blotted out as to character. It was a green and smiling land superficially, for all that it was in the hands of the enemy. The old battlefields could however, be seen, and even some of the lines which had been held at the cost of so much blood in the first days of the war. In fact, one of the positions taken in the advance by a Company of the Hampshires was a trench held by the British two or three years before.

Observation posts had been turned round by the Germans and used against us. Some of them were turned once again, and used by our own men. In places the advance had proceeded to a depth of 12,000 yards, which was an extraordinary jump. On the whole it was difficult going, because of the pill boxes and the well placed German artillery, for at the end of the day about a third of the Brigade were casualties. The Hampshires lost several good officers, including two Company Commanders. They probably lost in greater proportion to the other units because theirs had been the most difficult part of the work.

The gaining of the heights was a piece of work of the first consequence, but it was obvious from what could be seen ahead that if victory was to be won by fighting it would not be achieved just yet. The German line upon which the Hampshires could look was thick with machine gun posts thrown out in front of the line. In holding the line for the next few hours the Hampshires sustained quite a number of casualties from trench artillery as well as from machine guns. Enemy reinforcements could be seen coming up, and an attempt was made to rake the moving troops with heavy guns, but the advance had been so rapid that the heavies were not sufficiently forward to do a great deal of damage on this occasion. The chance came later however.

There was one particularly anxious moment during the fight. A party of the enemy succeeded in working its way, helped probably by the nature of the country, round the flank which was for a time in the air. In fact they reached a point about 200 yards from Battalion Headquarters. A very neat little show was put up by Colonel Westmorland, with his adjutant and the staff at H.Q. Regardless of the disproportion of strength they rushed the enemy clean off their feet, and even captured a bunch of them, certainly also saving the position. Col. Westmorland, by the way, was the son of Col. Westmorland (one of the best known officers of the Regiment before the war), who was in command at the Depot at Winchester during the whole war period.

Afterwards Headquarters were very heavily shelled; so badly that the Medical Officer had to move his post three times. But he carried on, treating about 150 cases, and even performing eleven amputations on the field.

CHAPTER XX.—Ypres again. 2nd Battalion

The Hampshires went out of the line for a bit about this time, and were very glad of it. They had been holding it quite thinly, which meant that everyone had to work very hard, and there was the constant anxiety regarding counter-attacks, for the fighting spirit of the enemy had not been wholly mastered. Indeed, there were days when he fought with all his old fatalism. They were finally relieved by a Welsh battalion, and went back about nine miles for a few days' rest.

Their next opportunity—this is still the record of the 2nd Battalion during the late autumn fighting of the last year of active war—was in the Ypres district, the famous battle-ground of the 1st Battalion in 1915. Several British Divisions were attached to the Belgians, as well as French formations, for the purpose of an attempt to free that corner of the field from the Hun. It was a great crusade for the Belgians, and as they were personally led by their King, they hoped, with the substantial aid that was placed at their disposal, to make a real impression upon the line.

The 2nd Division, with the 9th, were the storm troops of the Army, and it was a happy circumstance in this relation that they were led—the 88th Brigade that is—by Brigadier-General Freyberg, one of the war's greatest discoveries, who had gained the crossed swords before he was 30, and the V.C., and all that there chanced to be in the way of battle honours, in the course of his leaps up the ladder of promotion. Everyone knows his romantic record. It became a legend in the Army, and it was entirely appropriate that he should lead the Hampshires and the men of Essex, who, like himself, had won imperishable renown at Gallipoli and in France. Personal example was not exactly one of the battle merits of which the 2nd Hampshires stood in need—the record of the unit was its only spur—but whether they needed it or not, they had it in General Freyberg. He was an inspiration. He always went forward with the troops, and on one occasion was seen riding down the road on a white charger less than half a mile from the retreating enemy

The third battle of Ypres will be closely studied by the military historians of the future years. A huge mass of troops were employed in the operation; the staff work was wonderful, and everything happened as planned. It was a thoroughly satisfactory battle in brief. A battalion was thrust forward to its appointed task, and having duly performed it, came to a halt Then another straddled it, and so on. Some battalions jumped two others. Thus the troops were always fresh. It was the kind of situation which Chiefs of Staff prayed for, but were not often able to realise in the war. The speed of the advance was amazing. One place, at the gates of which the French had been battering for two years, fell in a day. It was full of deep tunnels and of fortifications of the most permanent kind, and was in a commanding position on a ridge running out from the Messines ridge. There was a honey-combed hill pitted with machine-gun emplacements—a hopeless looking job; but the Hampshires, and those with them, over-ran the whole place in a couple of hours.

It was not all easy. The troops were constantly held up with the machine-gunning German, who was not a quitter. That sort of thing took time, although the result was always the same. Also, it rained heavily, and continued to do so. Everyone was wet through, but matters of that sort count for little with troops who could at last see the signs of victory opening out before their eyes. The dawn was near, and they called the rain which soaked them through and through a clearing up shower, and put on an extra turn of speed.

So the Brigade went on to Ghuevelt, a famous battle-ground early in the war, and then to Ghelewe. There a pause was necessary in order that reinforcements could come up and for the keeping up of supply. The pace had been greater than anticipated. It was a little unfortunate, because it gave the enemy time to breathe. He was able to bring up fresh troops from somewhere, and they could be seen by the waiting Hampshires actually getting out of the trains. By the next morning these new Divisions of the enemy were in position, and as a result of their occupation of a pretty strong line with the usual hateful fringe of machine-gun nests, an action of the set kind was necessary before Ghelewe. The Hampshires pressed right through the town, but could not maintain all that they had won. Also they lost a good deal of their strength.

Presently they were withdrawn again for rest, their place being taken by the S.W. Borderers. The whole Division, indeed, went back, the intention being that

they should have a four days' pause. That did not happen, however. Within two days they had their orders again, and were moved north to take over the line held by their old friends of the 9th Division. And it was from this point that they went forward to the last big fight of that portion of the campaign. The objective was Ledegem, the final bastion of the enemy position before the Belgian plain and the Scheldt Valley. The position had been hastily but effectively wired, and the troops were held up a bit. Once through, the pace was terrific, nearly 11,000 yards being won in a single day. It was costly, too, for at the end nearly every Company was reduced to a single officer.

These final operations of the war in the West, which as far as the Second Battalion is concerned have yielded a fairly detailed account, were the subject of a special refereuce when the battalion was broken up on demobilisation a little later.

"As a fighting machine," the C.O. said in a letter in which his pride was in every respect justified, "we have developed the very highest efficiency. We have never been demoralised, we have never failed, we have never given ground without having been ordered to withdraw. In our attack on Hill 63 in connection with the 2nd Leinster Regiment we surprised the Higher Command. Here it was necessary to cross 2,500 yards of very flat and wet ground in order to reach our objective. In the final assault we had to force our way through great thicknesses of barbed wire, and face a great number of machine guns for which there was no cover. We advanced a mile ahead of other units. Again at Gheleuve, in the final battle of Ypres, the same thing happened."

CHAPTER XXI,—La Basse Canal. 1st Battalion

During the latter part of 1917 the 1st Battalion was in the Merville sector on the La Bassee Canal, and after the great and final Hun offensive the battalion was pushed forward to the support of Portuguese troops. It turned out to be a quiet pitch, though there was plenty of hard work in the preparation of the terrain for the advance which was contemplated. Before this took place the battalion went for a spell of rest at Arras, which was intended to extend over a fortnight. Their luck was out, like that of the 2nd Battalion in somewhat similar circumstances, for after the first night they were turned out again, being transferred with the whole of the Division, the 4th, to Robecq, where they remained some little time undergoing gas attacks, but very little of the kind of fighting to which the Battalion had been used.

Towards the end of the summer they went out of the line for a spell of training. Normally this would have covered a period of three weeks, but everything had to be packed into four days, for orders were unexpectedly received that the battalion should take up its position in front of Arras. There the Hampshires joined the Canadian Corps, and fought with the 4th Canadian Division under General Currie.

The first objective of the 1st Hampshires in the great sweep forward was the village of Monchy le Pruex, which was retaken. The association with the Canadians did not last long, for the Hampshires returned to the neighbourhood of Arras. They were used in the attack on the Hindenburg line east of Monchy, carrying out their part with great efficiency. The movement which resulted in the carrying of the Drocourt-Queant line was also a part of the Hampshire programme. Open warfare suited the Hampshires, and they moved steadily forward, cutting wire, laid in tremendously thick swathes, and passing prisoners through the lines.

Reaching the new land beyond the area of devastation already referred to, the Hampshires found training areas, wonderfully equipped, aerodromes, hospitals, and clubs for officers and men. Everywhere the Hampshires encountered road mines and booby traps, and received a certain number of casualties from these. One of the traps met by a Hampshireman was the suspended cat, upon the cutting down of which a mine exploded. But he was wise to that particular Hun manœuvre, and hunted for the bomb before he cut down the cat. At Etaing they found trenches which had been used by the Hun for training purposes, and these were turned about and used in the course of the advance. The Division was greatly hampered, as were those on either hand, by the Hun device of cutting dykes and flooding the country. Improvised rafts and boats had to be used, but it was obviously not possible to move divisions in this way, though much useful scouting

work was done. The general pressure upon the retreating army, however, was such that they evacuated the salient, and enabled the water-logged troops to make a detour which avoided the obstacle.

At Etaing there were evidences of great shortages of raw material the Hampshires finding that paper sand bags had been used by the enemy, and even that coffins in the cemeteries had been dispoiled for the purpose of getting the metal in which bodies had been enclosed. There also was a war cemetery containing bodies of enemy dead who according to the records had perished within a couple of days, as the result it was thought, of a British gas attack. They numbered 200 at least. There were a few British graves here also, all fairly well looked after. Over the grave of one was the inscription, "to a brave English soldier." The advance continued through villages occupied in many cases by the enemy ridden population. In October the Hampshires took Haspres, full of older men, women, and children who gave the rescuing troops the most vociferous of welcomes, kissing the troops and showing every sign of gratitude.

One of the difficulties of the advance was that the civil population of the Belgian towns had to be sent back as soon as the British arrived to the back areas, because the towns were under Hun shell fire. The people were naturally loth to leave their homes, and in consequence there were some casualties. The Battalion passed through the village taking up a line of outposts, an old factory being used as a rest quarters, baths being fixed up and all the other amenities of life out of the line. There the Battalion remained for a week.

The next objective of the Battalion was Moncheux, on the Escaillon River, which it was anticipated would be bridged by portable material with which the men were provided. But it proved inadequate, and in the result the men had to cross the river on a cold October morning, 4 a.m., by swimming and wading, the while the bank was lined with enemy machine guns. Also the river was wired, thus producing on a small scale the situation which faced the 2nd Hampshires on the beaches of Gallipoli. By great good luck the river was crossed with quite small losses, and the hither bank was successfully stormed. C and D Companies crossed before daylight and secured their positions, but the other two were hindered, and had to run the full gauntlet of the enemy gunning. In the course of the crossing one of the officers of the Battalion, an Australian, was separated from his fellows, and with an orderly and the company cook actually entered the village at a fresh point. When he reached the bank he found that the area of his landing was still strongly held by the Hun. Journeying through the village he encountered an enemy officer whom he successfully bluffed into the belief that the Hampshires had surrounded the whole village. He called upon the officer for surrender, and the trick succeeded. By this means 150 men were quickly rounded up The officer was recommended for the D.S.O., and was finally awarded the M.C.

A little later the enemy town major handed the village over to the O.C. of D. Company of the Hampshires. As the result of this coup 42 machine guns, 3 trench mortars, and hundreds of rifles and small ammunition were captured. The Hampshire casualties were comparatively slight..

This village, too, became a rest billet accommodation which was very welcome, being found for the weary troops who had been in the open of a bitter October for 17 days, their experiences also including the river crossing of which mention has been made.

Thereafter the enemy resistance to the Hampshires forward move was practically nil. The Hun went steadily back, carrying all he could with him. He was especially facile in recovering guns which were liable to capture. It was apparent about this time from enemy prisoners that the rank and file of the German Army had thrown up the sponge. They anticipated the signing of the Armistice any day, and were a good deal disappointed at being taken at the fag end of the war. Of course the Armistice did not, in fact, come into operation for more than a month after the last set action which the Hampshires fought. This was at the taking of the village of Presseau on the night of October 3rd-4th.

The Hampshires passed out of the forward positions after this, and were marched back to Queraing, and finally back to Haspres. They were in this neighbourhood when the Armistice was signed, but training operations still continued for some time, and Christmas was spent at Sebourg near Valenciennes. Soon after demobilisation started. The remainder of the Battalion moved to billets at La Louviere until March, when they went to Bainche, their divisional headquarters. They came home in cadre in June, being sent to Winchester.

CHAPTER XXII.—THE DARDANELLES

The Landing. 2nd Battalion

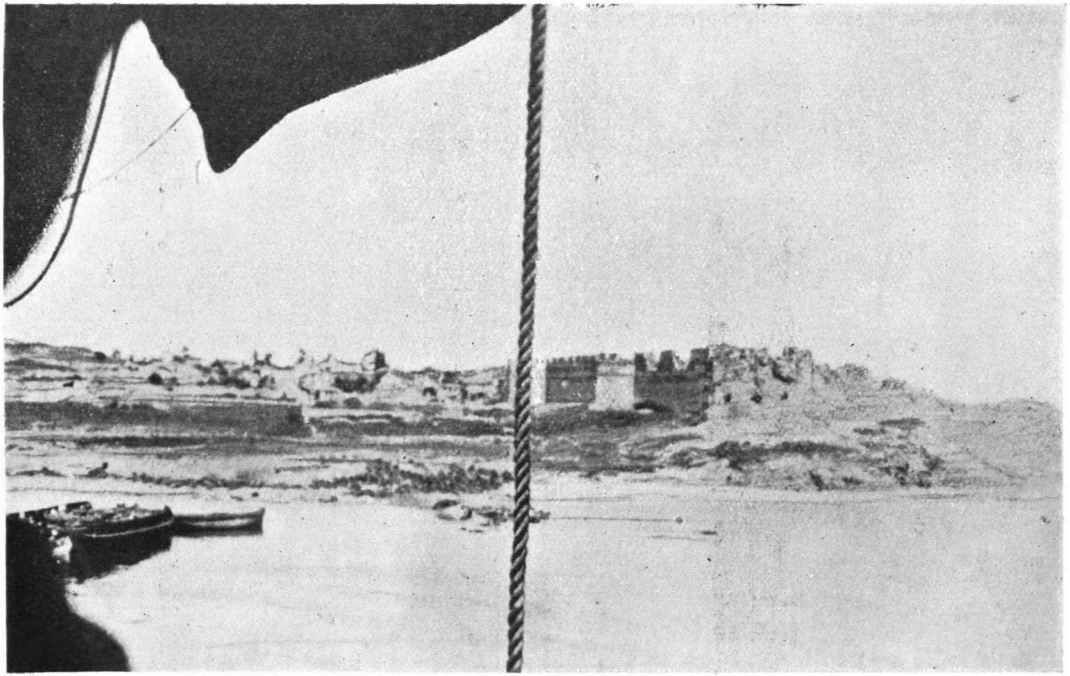
It was at the time that the 1st Battalion was in the midst of that wonderful defensive effort at Ypres, under General Plumer, that the 2nd Battalion set out upon the task which was to shed a fresh and glowing lustre upon the Regimental record. The 2nd Hampshires had been away from England for many years. They had gone from South Africa to Mauritius, and then to India, and coming home in the early days of the war were attached to the immortal and the incomparable 29th Division. The Army Division is an organisation which does not ordinarily remain in the mind of the civilian as it does in that of the soldier, and it is the proof of special glory that the 29th should be always thus referred to even in ordinary conversation. There are only one or two cases of this in the present war. The 51st Division, which helped to stem the rush of March, 1917, is another familiar example. The 2nd Hampshires reached the base of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in April, 1915, and they were associated. as were the 1st Battalion, with units of the Lancashire and Essex troops. Later they reached Lemnos, and when the naval preparation at the Dardanelles had run its course, and the decision was reached to attempt a landing on the Peninsula, the Battalion was one of the valorous company of the River Clyde —the Iron Horse of Troy. The part assigned to the River Clyde in that wonderful attempt to rush the Gallipoli beaches was that she should be run ashore for the purpose of landing her troops, and that the rest should be left to the wit and courage of the Brigade and Battalion commanders and the men. She was driven a little out of her course as she approached the beach, but finally came quietly to ground only 40 yards from the shore. An attempt was made to bridge the gap by means of lighters, and covering parties were placed in boats to ensure, if possible, the success of the operations.

The ship, the working parties, and the troops in the tow boats came under a withering fire from the Turkish machine gunners, hidden in sheltered positions above the beach, and from the heavy pieces upon the height above. In a few cases, troops leapt from the boats into the waters and attempted to scramble to land. In some of the boats nearly every man aboard was hit. Quite a number, not only from the River Clyde, but from other vessels similarly employed, reached a sand bank, and still under a hail of lead, managed to "scrabble" up some sort of shelter with their entrenching tools. The sand bank became the first stage in that race against iron death. Presently it was full of khaki forms, digging for dear life in the treacherous sand. Turkish guns were turned upon it, and the troops on the sand bank suffered galling losses. Presently another rush was made for the beach, checked not by the persistent fire, but by hidden wire beneath the water, and by an inshore minefield. It was an impossible obstacle, and once more the landing parties were swept away by the machine gunners. The troops on the sand bank tried to cover the landing of their comrades by rifle fire, but the sand had got into the mechanism and reduced the volume greatly.

In that desperate rush to the beach one Battalion of the same formation as the Hampshires lost the equivalent in numbers of three companies. Every living thing was swept by the hissing bullets which rained upon the landing parties, frontally and from either flank. Still, they pushed on. Nothing that British troops had experienced in this or any other war could resemble this frantic rush through the shallows, wire ridden, and foul with death, while above the pitiless bullets sprayed, pocking the water and sweeping the attackers away in swathes.

All this time the Hampshires lay hidden on the River Clyde. Her steel sides rang with the singing bullets; her decks were bare, and occasionally a heavy shell forged great gashes in deck and hull, killing and maiming as it went. The Brigadier attempted to board the steamer, but fell under the flail of the Turkish machine guns, and the command of the Brigade fell upon the Hampshire C.O., Colonel Carrington Smith, as senior officer. He held it for a few hours only, being killed by an unexpected burst of fire while on the vessel's bridge. It was a tragic coincidence that both the 1st and 2nd Battalions lost their commanders within a few days, Col. Hicks and Col. Carrington Smith both falling, moreover, just after they had taken over the Brigades to which their Battalions were attached.

At last the whole Brigade reached the beach of death, and the advance towards the forts, every inch of the way being most bitterly fought, began. Indeed, the actual landing was the beginning of a way of sorrows.



Seddul-Bahr—taken from the River Clyde iust after the 2nd Hampshires had landed.

(By courtesy of the Editor of the Hampshire Regimental Journal).

CHAPTER XXIII.—Krithia. 2nd Battalion

Seddul Bahr was only reduced by street fighting of the deadliest character, and then the advance towards Achi Baba began. The Hampshires, fighting alongside the Worcesters and the Lancashires, had every kind of military obstacles to overcome. Every yard of the way was covered by the Turkish gunners, every ounce of supply had to be landed under devastating shellfire, and brought up to the line under gunfire, plus the constant spatter of machine gunning. Every man thirsted horribly; the climate was of the beastliest, and there was ahead the certainty that the golden prize could only be won at immense sacrifice, if it could be won at all. If not—everyone knew what evacuation in a hurry would mean, and the layman could see by glancing at the map. Of course, backward glances of this sort occurred to none of the troops at the time. Their eyes were upon Krithia to a man, and they had not a doubt as they pressed along the treacherous gullies and ravines that the heights would in time be theirs, and then with the Narrows cleared of the death which lurked beneath the water, the way to the Golden Horn would be open. In the meantime the Hampshires had suffered cruelly. By the middle of May the Battalion had lost nine officers killed and 14 wounded, and of other ranks the toll was 61 killed, 506 wounded, and 40 missing and died of wounds. A few of the missing, however, subsequently rejoined.

As a result of the unwearying and tenacious fighting of the 29th Division, the Naval Division, and the Anzacs, the Mediterranean Army had established itself fairly firmly at Achi Baba and at the foot of the Krithia heights in the early summer. Thereafter, for a time, there was a condition of stalemate. It was dreadfully wearisome—this form of trench work—because of the impossibility of withdrawing tired troops to resting places behind the lines. Occasionally, when endurance was stretched almost beyond human limits, troops were withdrawn to Lemnos for refitting, and during this process the Hampshires had received reinforcing drafts amounting to 300 men.

Just before this, however, the Battalion had been most heavily engaged near Krithia. An advance was ordered, and the Hampshires, shewing great dash, cleared the first, second, and third lines of Turkish trenches with the bayonet, and held them until reinforcements arrived. Five men received the D.C.M. as the result of this operation. There was a moment, however, when their situation was so serious that a Second Lieutenant, in his twentieth year, was temporarily in command of the Battalion. He was 2nd Lieutenant G. R. D. Moor, who won the Victoria Cross at Krithia. When a detachment of a Battalion operating on the left of the Hampshires, and had lost all its officers, was rapidly retiring before a heavy Turkish attack, Dallas Moor, appreciating the danger to the remainder of the line, dashed back two hundred yards, stemmed the retirement, and finally recaptured the lost trench. It was a brilliant piece of work. Capturing trenches, holding them, and when this was impossible, retiring again, earned for the Hampshires for the second time in the war the character of "Stone-wallers." Curiously enough, General Hunter Weston, who was in command of the 29th Division, had been the Brigadier of the 11th Brigade in France, and he said, concerning the 2nd Battalion, "I commanded the Brigade in which their 1st Battalion was, in France, and they never lost a trench, and these men are just the same."

On August 6th the Battalion was ordered to attack the trenches in front of Krithia as part of the design of covering the Suvla Bay landing. The attack was made after very heavy preliminary bombardment, which, however, was ineffective, for the troops came under intense machine-gun fire directly they attempted to rush the enemy trenches.

The Commander of the Mediterranean Army knew how much he owed to the 29th Division, for in a Special Force Order, bearing date June 29th, and signed by Major-General Braithwaite, the Chief of Staff (who, by the way, had further experience of the Hampshires when holding a divisional command in France later on), Sir Ian Hamilton said: "The General Officer Commanding feels sure that he voices the sentiments of every soldier serving with this Army, when he compliments the 29th Division upon yesterday's splendid attack" (he was speaking of the massed attack upon the Turkish positions which followed when the landing and consolidation were complete), "carried out as it was in a manner more than upholding the best traditions of the distinguished regiments of which it is composed. The 29th suffered cruel losses at the first landing. Since then they have never been made up to strength, and they have remained under fire every hour of the night

and day for two months on end. Opposed to them were fresh troops, holding line upon line of entrenchments, flanked by redoubts and machine-guns. But when yesterday the 29th Division were called upon to advance, they dashed forward as eagerly as if this were only their baptism of fire. Through the entanglements they swept northwards, clearing our left of the enemy for a full thousand yards. Heavily counter-attacked at night, they killed or captured every Turk who had penetrated their incomplete trenches, and to-day they stand possessed of every yard they had so hardly gained. Therefore, it is that Sir Ian Hamilton is confident he carries with him all ranks of his force when he congratulates Generals Hunter-Weston and de Lisle, the staff, and each officer, N.C.O., and man in this Division, whose sustained efforts have added fresh lustre to British arms all the world over."

Before the reinforcements arrived, the strength of the Battalion had gone down to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 250, but they often took trenches occupied by many times their own strength, and when it came to holding on they were very leeches. Strengthened and rested after their terrific gruelling in June and July, driven nearly mad by thirst, pestered beyond bearing almost by the flies, harried and worn down to the bone by their incessant toil, the Hampshires—a corps d'elite by this time—were ordered forward on a grand scale attack on the Turkish lines of Krithia, which the troops were directed to take "regardless of cost."

Here is an account of the operations, written by the father of a Hampshire officer who was killed in leading the last desperate attempt:—

"The Hampshire Regiment was commanded that day by Major Parker, with Capt. Day second-in-command. All the senior officers had been killed or disabled in previous fighting. The Worcesters were on the right, the Essex on the left, and the Hampshires in the centre, divided into four double companies. Two under Major Parker, who was killed almost directly the attack began, operated on the left, and two under Capt. Day on the right.

"It had been arranged that the attack should be made in three lines, and precisely at four o'clock the first line was ordered to attack. The men had no sooner sprung out of their trenches than a murderous shrapnel, machine-gun, and rifle fire was poured into them, and the whole first line was wiped out. The second line was immediately ordered to advance, and fared no better. The third line was then formed up for attack, together with a small force held in reserve. This line was led out by Capt. Day, who is said to have been killed just as he reached the enemy's trenches, along with five men—all that were left to get so far! Eighteen officers of the Hampshires laid down their lives that day, and 620 men of the regiment were killed or wounded.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Suvla Bay. 1/8th Battalion

Though the Hampshire Regiment's part in the Dardanelles as far as the 2nd Battalion is concerned is told in fairly complete fashion in the narrative just completed, it is necessary to explain that three battalions were concerned, and it will perhaps give finish to the story if I set out a summary of the movements of the 8th (I.W.) Battalion with which I have been kindly supplied by gentlemen interested in this plan of war record preserving:—

The 1/8th Battalion Hants Regiment (Princess Beatrice's I.W. Rifles), 1,020 strong, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel J. E. Rhodes, left the Isle of Wight in the spring of 1915, the writer says. They first went to Bury St. Edmunds, where they had their first experience of a Zeppelin raid. Afterwards they proceeded to Watford for training, and on the 29th July, 1915, they left for Liverpool, and embarked aboard the Aquitania with 7,000 troops. On account of trouble among the stokers the Aquitania did not leave on the day she was expected. What happened was this: She was "stoked" out to Gallipoli in six and a half days, among those taking part in the grimy work being a number of volunteers from the Isle of Wight Rifles. Some of the officers took a turn, including the late Lieut. Charles Grant Seely (afterwards captain), none being more willing or enthusiastic than he.

They landed at Suvla Bay on the 10th August. Two days later they took part in the big advance when our forces captured the seven Anafarta Wells. Many a brave Islander found a soldier's grave on that never-to-be-forgotten day. Truly Gallipoli took heavy toll, for on that one day alone there fell Major E. H. Lewis, Captain A. Holmes-Gore, Captain Donald Ratsey, Captain Clayton Ratsey, Lieut. L. C. Watson, Second-Lieut. F. C. M. Raymond, Captain G. C. Loader, and Second-Lieut. W. B. Bartlett.

LIEUT. DALLAS MOOR, V.C.,

who won the Cross at the age of 18 at Krithia. He was the first Hampshire Regiment V.C. of the War.

(By courtesy of the Editor of the Hampshire Regimental Journal).

Lieutenant W. F. Read died in Alexandria from appendicitis following the effects of dysentery This was in September, 1915.

On January 29th, 1916, three Island officers and one non-commissioned officer were mentioned in despatches by General Sir Ian Hamilton in connection with the Gallipoli fighting. Their names were Major Veasey, the late Captain C. S. Pittis, Captain Raymond, R.A.M.C., and Regimental-Sergeant-Major Bryant.

Recalling once again the fierce fighting on the 12th August, 1915, at Gallipoli, one of the Island N.C.O.s who had been through the South African campaign, and was wearing two medals which he had won whilst fighting against the Boers, turned to an officer and said: "I have seen more fighting in the last three hours" (the battle began at 4 and ended at 7 p.m.) "than I did during the whole of my experience in South Africa."

On the 14th August stretcher-bearers were asked to volunteer to go up to the fighting line to bring in the wounded, and the Island men responded nobly to the call to go through what was described as "hell fire."

Before essaying the task the men at the bidding of their brave Padre knelt reverently for a few moments in prayer. He then shook hands with every man, but he did more than this—he went with them and shared their hardships and danger. His name will always be honoured among our Island boys. It was the Rev. Pierpont Edwards, C.F., M.C.

CHAPTER XXV. Chunuk Bahr. 10th Battalion

The following account of the 10th Hampshire's experiences at Chunuk Bahr was written by Lieut. F. W. Parry, who served with that Battalion, and later with the 2nd Battalion. They were in reserve to the Anzacs at Lone Pine—the place of eight V.C.'s—and then went forward across the flaming scrub to the impassible slopes of the great hill. It was epic fighting, lasting three days, and causing losses such as no Hampshire Battalion has been called upon to face in the whole story of the war.

The Battalion arrived at Lemnos on July 21st, and disembarked the following day without mishap. After marching for about a mile inland, writes Lieut. Parry, we took up lines for bivouac on one of the slopes overlooking the harbour. The evening saw the departure of fourteen small ship-loads of reinforcements for the Peninsula. Lemnos, the advanced base, possesses a fine harbour capable of holding a fleet of several hundred ships at anchor. During the fortnight which followed we had a good chance of getting acclimatised and hardened. Fatigue work of all descriptions, route marches under a tropical sun, with a temperature of 118 deg. in the shade, night marching, culminating with an attack upon some lofty ridge, enabled all concerned to get back into their stride and shake off the effects of the long voyage.

The move to the scene of action came on August 5th, when we embarked on small steamers, and after a short trip silently landed on the Peninsula at Anzac Cove, in the darkness. It was afterwards known that only the 29th Brigade landed at this point. Australian guides took us along the beach, and then along a track which wound its way through gullies, until we came to our allotted position. Here we at once commenced digging in; for some sort of cover was essential in any part of the captured territory during the early and latter parts of the day, when the exchange of "hate" was most intense

Several men were killed and wounded the following morning by shrapnel and high explosive. Although instructions were given to keep out of sight during the day-time they were quite unnecessary that first day, the best part of which was spent in deepening holes and making dug-outs. The patch where we found ourselves was part of the original ground captured by the Anzacs. Practically no trees were standing—what had been growing were either cleared or uprooted by shell-fire. The soil was hard, brown, and parched, and was covered here and there with patches of low scrub. Each of the nullahs or gullies was named by the Colonials after some particular incident connected with the same, such as Suicide Gully, Pope's Hill, Johnson's Jolly, Bloody Angle, Dead Man's Ridge, Lone Pine, etc.

We were in an offshoot of Shrapnel Gully, known as Newbridge-road. It became known that the Brigade were to be held in reserve to the Anzacs, who were to attack the next day, August 6th. This corps of Colonials were splendid soldiers; fine, big, muscular men, who filled all who saw them at their job with admiration. A better lot of men I have never seen. The attack, which had been

contemplated for several weeks, was begun by a bombardment of the Turkish lines by naval guns and batteries of field and mountain artillery. The din was frightful—the deafening explosions accentuated by being re-echoed many times from hill to hill. Shells screamed overhead, the enemy vigorously replying—the Jack Johnsons were very much in evidence.

For a while no sign of life was seen, but at dusk the attack by the Colonials was launched. The noise was immediately intensified by the quick reports of thousands of rifles and machine-guns. The attack progressed, and by 9 p.m. three sets of trenches had been taken and 520 prisoners sent back. Our own wounded started to pass down the communication trenches a few minutes after the assault was delivered. Some being carried on stretchers were pitiful sights, others limped along or were helped by those only slightly injured. Many were jubilant and cheerfully smoked cigarettes as they made their way down to the clearing stations.

The noise began to die down with the darkness, but sniping and bombing, which continued during the night, told of trenches and positions still contested. As a matter of fact a trench built of concrete, known as German Officers' Trench, held out against repeated attacks. Casualties were heavy on both sides. The Turks lost large numbers in their endeavours to regain the lost trenches. The fighting continued during the day which followed, and actions seemed to be in progress all along the line. These operations with the attack the previous evening were meant as a big demonstration to hold as many Turks as possible in front, and prevent them sending reinforcements to their right to oppose our new landing which had been made at several points in Suvla Bay. At the same time, many useful and dominating positions were wrested from the Turks. The New Zealand Brigade advanced about a mile—they occupied positions on the extreme left of the line.

The Turkish attacks were persistently delivered throughout the 7th and 8th. Between the attacks bomb fighting continued, especially at night—most of the trenches were cleared by this method. During these days the Hampshires remained in support, and their casualties were comparitively few—sixteen on the 7th. However, it was certainly a baptism of fighting, and quite a few wished the Australians had given us the opportunity to join in with them.

It was characteristic of the Colonials out there that whatever job they had in hand, they would set about to do it without any outside assistance. It would have been a simple matter to have brought up a fresh Battalion in the memorable fight for the trenches around Lone Pine. Yet the Australian infantry made a fresh attack on these trenches which the Turks thought impregnable—an attack which will live in history. The Colonials charged across sixty yards of fire-swept open ground, under every kind of fire, and had to dig their way into the enemy's trenches, which had been roofed in with timber. They suffered terribly, but actually took their objective and held it against counter attacks. Eight V.C.'s were afterwards awarded for this Lone Pine fight.

In reading the foregoing account, the reader will doubtless observe that little mention is made of the Hampshires—but they were there, although not called upon for active support.

The Hampshires were destined, with their Brigade, to be thrown against the stiffest proposition in the great attack against the ridge of hills in front of Suvla which was to be made on the 9th and 10th.

It will be necessary to say something about the country over which this homeric contest was to be fought. The Sari Bahr ridge stretched for about five miles to the north of Anzac, and its heights dominated the Peninsula and the Narrows. The Peak of this ridge was known as 971, and was quite three miles from the coast. The series of Deres (gullies)—stiff propositions in themselves—invariably ran at right angles from the shore towards the ridge in front. On the sides of these gullies grew thick prickly bushes or scrub, and here and there patches of a small species of acorn tree. At the bottom of the gullies was to be found the dried up beds of what became mountain torrents in the stormy seasons.

The particular part where the Hampshires fought and died was Chunuk Bahr and its immediate approaches, including a place known as The Farm. They formed one of three assaulting columns, who were to take Chunuk Bahr, and started to move northward from their shelters in Rest Gully early on the 8th. Progress along a sap which had been cut by the Anzacs was very slow, and one part was under the fire of Turkish artillery. The columns did not get out into the new territory without sustaining casualties. The 10th Hamp-

shires and the 6th R. Irish Rifles lay down in lines, when dusk fell, at the head of the gully they had traversed; but before rest had been obtained, again moved on to get into position for assault. After marching and halting for the best part of the night, the morning of the 9th found them with the great slopes of Chunuk Bahr in front. There seemed to be nothing for it, but to attempt what appeared to be a gigantic task. The men were already tired with their wanderings through this most difficult country with practically no rest, food, or drink, for the best part of two days.

When the advance shook out, a most inspiring effort was made to charge up the slope under a harassing fire of bullets and shrapnel. They scrambled to a point about a quarter of a mile beyond The Farm, which afforded some shelter, and here took up a position. Then orders came for two companies of the battalion to attempt to cross the big gap between the position held and that of the New Zealanders, who had succeeded in reaching the crest on their right flank. Although they suffered cruelly in effecting touch, connection was made, and a weak line joined the two columns. This temporary line was maintained throughout the day. To advance would have meant annihilation. They had to stick where they were, suffering in the intense heat, waiting for the time to move again. Conditions were almost unbearable—the heat and thirst in particular. Dusk did not bring relief, but orders to entrench in the positions held, and so a bit of a trench was made with difficulty.

The early morning brought the Turkish counter-attack. Masses swarmed over the crest and down the slope against our line, which was so weakly held by a comparatively few tired troops. They put up a splendid resistance, but in many places were overwhelmed and wiped out. The Turks must have suffered very heavily, as the Fleet blasted away at them as they came over the slope in their masses.

How the Hampshires suffered can be realised by the fact that only one officer and about 25 per cent. of the men were left by the end of the day. Their Colonel (Lieut.-Col. Bewsher) was the only senior officer still standing quite early in the day. Brig.-Gen. Baldwin was killed, and our own Brigadier wounded, and his staff wiped out. All the Sergeants-Majors and Quartermaster-Sergeants were down, and the remnant of Hampshires and Rifles who survived and got back during the retirement and adjustment of the line were utterly fatigued.

Accounts are given of how detachments fought to a finish, hand-to-hand with the enemy, who outnumbered them by at least ten to one. It was a supreme sacrifice, with no hope of assistance, as there were no reserves to call upon. Eight Hampshire officers and a big proportion of men were killed in this gallant stand. Severely wounded men had to be forsaken. Only those who could manage to crawl or help themselves got back; the others were left and must have died in agony. It was said that the scrub around caught fire in places from the bursting shells, but it is hoped that this was not true. The original 10th Battalion had almost ceased to exist as part of that splendid Division of Irishmen who had fought their one and only fight. A well-known newspaper correspondent described the battle for Sari Bahr as the hardest fighting since Inkerman.

General Godley said: "I do not believe that any troops in the world could have accomplished more. All ranks vied with one another in the performance of gallant deeds, and more than worthily upheld the best traditions of the British Army."

Questions are sometimes asked what did the 10th Battalion do in Gallipoli? They did all that was required of them, and died facing the impossible. The officers went first, and fell first—not one combatant officer went unscratched; their Quartermaster actually commanded the battalion until reinforcements arrived. Next in order came two or three Sergeants. It is placed on record that a few days after their withdrawal, these men were ready and went into another big assault on the 21st August.

Sir Ian Hamilton wrote: "The old German notion that no unit would stand a loss of more than 25 per cent. had been completely falsified. The 13th Division and the 29th Brigade of the 10th (Irish) Division had lost more than twice that proportion, and in spirit were game for as much more fighting as might be required."

CHAPTER XXVI.—MESOPOTAMIA

The Territorial Battalions

It will, perhaps, make for a clearer understanding of the part the Hampshire Regiment played in the war in the East which must of necessity be a somewhat fragmentary record, if it is preceded by a summary of the movements of the Territorial battalions during the war years. For they alone took part, as representing the County Regiment, in the campaigns in Mesopotamia and Syria; one battalion practically right through; another during the last eighteen months or so, and the others only in the way of drafts. That is in regard to Mesopotamia only. There were two complete battalions in the campaign in Palestine, but in one of these cases it was absorbed again before the end. It will be seen that the tracks of the various battalions cross and re-cross each other and those of other regiments until it is almost hopeless to keep the business clearly in mind. Wherefore this summary of the movements of the battalions.

1/4th Battalion (Winchester) went to India in October, 1914, as part of the original 1st Wessex Division. Stationed first at Poona and then at Quetta. Was in the first batch of reinforcements for Mesopotamia, and was itself reinforced as need arose from practically all the Hampshire battalions quartered in India.

2/4th Battalion (Winchester) reached India a little later with the remainder of the second line battalions (Territorials) of the regiment. Stationed at Quetta, and remained there till 1917, when they went to Egypt, taking part in the advance on Jerusalem in the winter of that year. Sent subsequently to France (in 1918), and served with great distinction near Rheims under Major-General Braithwaite as part of a North Country Division under circumstances already dealt with.

1/5th Battalion (Southampton), also part of the 1st Wessex Division, stationed on reaching India at Allahabad, with detachments at Benares and Cawnpore. Later, the battalion went to Lucknow, but companies and smaller units were sometimes detached and individual men on specialised duty served practically everywhere in Northern India. The battalion spent seven months in Burma in 1917, and on return to India was stationed at Ambala. The battalion supplied drafts to the Mesopotamia Field Force, and in that way suffered heavy casualties and earned many awards and high praise. The Battalion also saw service on the frontier during the Afghan rising.

2/5th Battalion (Southampton), went out with the second batch of Wessex Territorials, the first station being Secunderabad, with one company at Madras. Remained in India till early in 1917, when they joined the force gathered in Egypt for the advance into Syria. The battalion was engaged in all the heavy fighting of the campaigns of 1917 and 1918, and took part in the great advance on Jerusalem, suffering very heavily. So serious were the casualties of this battalion, indeed, that by the summer of 1918 its effective—bayonet—strength was 250 only, though on landing at Suez on April 4th of the preceding year it was a thousand strong, and had its full complement of officers. As a consequence of the difficulty of bringing the battalion up to strength by means of drafts—the depot battalion was fully occupied in meeting the needs of the regular and service Hampshire battalions in France—the 2/5th was attached to the 1/4th Wiltshires, and so served during the remainder of the campaign.

1/6th Battalion (Portsmouth). Reached Bombay with the 1st Wessex Division in November, 1914. Five companies stationed at Dinapore and three at Dum Dum—the great Indian arsenal. Some companies served at Dera Dun and Chakrata, these movements being necessitated by unrest, which prevailed at the time.

Later, the battalion re-assembled at Agra, and subsequently went to Umbala. Meerut was the battalion's last station before proceeding on active service in September, 1917, reaching Basra about the middle of October. The Battalion's experiences will be dealt with, as in the case of the other units, in the story of the Mesopotamian and Syrian campaigns.

1/7th Battalion (Bournemouth). Part of the 1st Wessex Division; was stationed on reaching India at Coloba, near Bombay, being moved later to Meerut. There was the not unusual breaking up of the battalion, Delhi and Chakrata being among the stations visited in this kind of way. Later, this battalion was also at Umbala, remaining there until sent to Aden at the end of 1917. Meantime, the battalion had supplied drafts to other battalions for

active service (150 to the 1/4th, and 100 to the 2/7th being among them). At Aden, the battalion was brought up to strength by a draft from the Lincolns. Served with the Aden Field Force, seeing service regularly until the end of the war.

2/7th Battalion (Bournemouth). The first station in India was at Secunderabad, the next move being to Jubblepore. The battalion had various other moves before joining the Mesopotamia force, where they saw service in plenty, and incurred heavy losses.

8th Battalion. This Isle of Wight formation did not go to India at all, but this brief summary is given in order to complete the record of the Territorial units. It first saw service in the Dardanelles campaign—being one of three Hampshire battalions there—and was subsequently stationed in Egypt. Though it supplied drafts to the 1/4th, the battalion itself went on service into Palestine, being attached to the 163rd Brigade of the 54th Division, to which latter formation belongs the distinction of being the only infantry division which fought through all the phases of the Palestine campaign unchanged in their order of battle.

The 9th Battalion had a long spell of coast watching duty as a cyclist battalion before proceeding overseas. It reached Bangalore in 1916, and later went to Delhi. Saw active service in Siberia.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Euphrates Blockade. 1/4th Battalion

The 1/4th Battalion was the first among the Hampshire Battalions in India to receive orders for active service, their first destination being Basra, by way of Karachi. It was at Basra that Major John Crichton (Sir Harry Crichton's son), who went out with the 1/5th Battalion, died. In mid-March they reached camp at Makama Masees, and in the following month they relieved the 2nd Norfolks at Basra. The first fighting of the Winchester battalion (the 4th) occurred in this month, the men taking part in the Euphrates blockade. The machine gunners were at all events busily employed, but it was not in any real sense a battalion baptism.

If their casualties were low in this kind of active service the sufferings from pestilence were serious, and many of the men were in consequence sent back to India, the base of the Mesopotamia force. The 1/4th took part in the Euphrates expedition to Nasireh, travelling by paddle-steamers, stern-wheelers, native craft, and indeed in anything available which would float. It was a native boat, roomier than the average, which was adapted as a hospital ship. One of the steamers by which the Hampshiremen passed up river had an iron barge lashed on either quarter, and alongside the barge again were native mahelahs. In this queer convoy the commander, General Gorringe, made the journey with his staff. The whole, said one member of the party with an eye for historical exactitude, looked like a Noah's ark in movement. Sometimes the Euphrates was a mighty river; sometimes a mere trickle between reedy swamps; sometimes it seemed like a great marsh. Navigation was of course immensely difficult. One of the greatest of the difficulties was the obstruction of sunken craft. After crossing the great Hammar Lake, for example, the fleet of river craft came across a great river obstruction placed there by the enemy for the purpose of preventing the passage of the oncoming army. It was partly formed of cement, and partly of sunken native craft, and dynamite alone cleared the way. But the gap which it was possible to make was quite small, and vessels had to force a passage by the aid of man-power lined at a cable's end on the bank. It was not the first time that the Hampshires had been fairly up against physical difficulties of an almost insuperable sort, but they had learnt resourcefulness, and struggled cheerfully on amid the heat and amid the desultory fire of Turkish small calibre guns.

Sometimes during the journey up river it was necessary to stand and fight in order to remove a menace to the line of communications.

This was immensely difficult, because the enemy ranks included Arabs, who knew every inch of difficult country, and could not easily be cornered by troops tied to the river more or less by the need of

pushing on. At one point it was necessary to make a serious demonstration. The Hampshires and an Indian battalion landed and occupied positions on one side of a difficult creek facing Turkish irregulars and Arabs on the other. The enemy had anticipated a landing, and had placed themselves in strong mud huts in a dense palm grove. Well-situated machine-guns and light pieces rendered the situation of the Hampshires the reverse of pleasant. It did not last long, happily, for another native regiment caught the guerilla fighters on the flank, and a bridging party enabled other troops to get at close quarters. It was not long before the wasps nest was burnt out and some substantial captures effected. Then the journey up river was resumed. There were periods of intense heat, the thermometer sometimes rising to 120 deg. Blinding dust added to the trials of the men, and there was the pestilence of flies, disease producing, sleep destroying, and generally making life a burden. Considering all things, the progress made was highly satisfactory. We knew very little about it at the time. Our eyes were turned feverishly to the west. Mesopotamia was described at that time, and always unfairly by those who were known as Westerners, as a side show. It never was, in fact, anything but a major campaign with an immense influence on the war. Moreover, we knew nothing at that time of the breakdown which was the subject of subsequent inquiry, and so much bitter anguish to the men who served east of Suez, and of anguish to their "ain folk" at home.

Consequently, there was a sense of surprise and intense satisfaction at the announcement made at the end of September, 1915, by Mr. Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India, of a big scale victory in front of Kut el Amara, only 100 miles short of Bagdad, towards which city the enemy was stated to be in full flight. It was a position fight, in which General Nixon had completely out-manœuvred the Turkish commander. It was, as a writer said at the time, a magnificent feat of arms. As he pointed out, "the distance covered by the Anglo-Indian force on its march to Bagdad is nearly 300 miles. Two-thirds of the journey which our troops have to make is now accomplished, for we may assume that Bagdad will be the goal of the expedition." So we were cheered. We waited for a fresh announcement concerning what was to people at home at that time with no knowledge of the terrain or of the complications of Asian local politics, a wonderful crusade. Instead, Ctesiphon, only eighteen miles from Bagdad—and Kut, and weary waiting and bitter casualty lists, with at long last a fresh beginning with adequate forces. The disillusionment was a humbling experience, but it was not all loss. It must never be forgotten that but for what General Townshend did, the Turkish dream of reaching India might easily have been realised.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Siege of Kut. 1/4th Battalion (part of)

The decisions of the Government of India, or those of the Imperial Government when they took over the reins, have not much to do with a record such as this—the record of the Hampshire part. And yet they cannot be separated wholly from the story—they are part of the stuff of it. The attempt to do more than was humanly possible conditioned the whole campaign. "The whole tragedy of Mesopotamia," said Mr. Chandler hinged on the decision to advance from Kut-el-Amara." Whether or not Sir John Nixon was right or wrong in believing that he could carry out the task which was set him it is of little service to discuss. He thought he could, and said so, though he certainly added that he could not permanently occupy Bagdad without cavalry reinforcements. Ctesiphon was the key place, and the beginning of nearly all the troubles of the Army of the East. Even there General Townshend's men made an admirable beginning. They stormed the Turks first line, and were "well away" in the expressive phrase of the Army with the second, but there was no question about this, the force was not strong enough to drive the blow home. The retreat which had such far reaching results was imperative, and—the fact must never be forgotten—it was carried out in a masterly way. Had it failed there would have been no investment of Kut, and had the Turks not been compelled to stop there—but this is pure speculation, and leads only in the mirage.

The long and pitiful siege of Kut is quite the most poignant chapter in the battle story of the Hampshire Regiment for the 1/4th's Headquarters, and during the earliest stage a couple of companies of the battalion were there. They had made the journey up river, under circumstances already narrated in any shipping available, native craft being very largely used. It was not in some respects an uninteresting journey, says one who made it, apart from the flies—the Asian fly is a thing apart in the story of creation—the heat, and the cramped quarters. Soon after the arrival of the Hampshire Territorials in Kut one company was sent down river as escort to the Army Commander, leaving in the town so soon to be encircled Headquarters and one company. They were there on the fateful December 15th, 1915, when the siege began.

The Hampshiremen's experiences were those of that unlucky garrison which so many gallant attempts were made under the most unpropitious circumstances to relieve, and when General Townshend, having exhausted all his resources and given up, as he was obliged to do, any hope of succour while his men lived, handed his sword to the Turkish Commander, ten Hampshire officers, including Major Footner, and 82 men of the battalion were with him. These witnessed the bitterness of the retreat from Ctesiphon. They saw the army which had gone so gallantly forth on what was thought to be the last stage of the long road to Baghdad, and they watched with eyes that scarcely believed the return of the head of an army in retreat. That was on December 2nd and 3rd.

The main part of Townshend's force had bivouacked outside the town, and came in battle-worn and weary almost to the point of dropping in their tracks on the following day. The day after that the force was invested fully. It was a novel experience at first. There was not a man in the garrison who doubted that it would be but a matter of a week or two before the investing forces would be dispersed, and that the march to Baghdad would be resumed with a force sufficiently strong to set the issue beyond doubt. Their situation, though never other than hideously uncomfortable, was hardly regarded as perilous at first. They were shelled more or less constantly, being subjected by the Turks, copying their German masters, to periodical doses of "hate."

"By standing at Kut," said the General, "I maintain the territory we have won in the past year at the expense of much blood, commencing with your glorious victory at Shaiba, and thus we maintain the campaign as a glorious one, instead of letting disaster pursue its course down to Amara, and perhaps beyond."

Presently the garrison had the experience of being bombed; but the coming of the 'plane to the East as an engine of war brought relief in another way. Our own planes were able to drop urgent necessities. There was much sickness as the result of short commons, but the optimism of the garrison was of sturdy growth. Everyone made the best of the food, and the best of the meagre means that existed of killing the leisure which was on their hands—except perhaps the hospital staff—in plenty. So it went on until the end. A gallant but unsuccessful attempt to run the blockade was made. Then there was the interview which Generals Townshend and Melliss had with the Turkish Commander, and the inevitable surrender after what even the enemy chief was constrained to call an heroic defence of five months.

After the fall of Kut, the Hampshires were taken to the Turkish camp at Shumram, 15 miles off, where the men were separated from the officers, and taken away on their march to Asia Minor. The officers were sent to Baghdad, where they were paraded for the edification of the populace. They were taken by train from there to Samara, and from there were marched to the rail-head at Rass-el-ain, a distance of over 400 miles, whence they were entrained for their various camps.

If the task of tracing the five or six battalions of the Hampshire Regiment which fought in France was one of difficulty, there are moments when it seems almost hopeless when the Mesopotamia campaign is under consideration. The element of mystery existed there, as well as in France, with this difference—that whereas on the nearer field the absence of news, such as was possible late in the war from the war correspondents, was made good by statements from official records which, if not what the people wanted, were at least useful, and by despatches at greater or less intervals. In the East, the despatches were much less frequent; of war correspondents there was only one, and he was often enough miles away from a base, and then more thousands of miles from home, and the telegraph (always required for priority messages) was the only link. Under those circumstances the messages he sent were the bare bones of the story.

Sometimes a member of one of the Hampshire units sent a story home relating to his experiences, but of Mesopotamia it was even more true than of France, that all the soldier knew was that which occurred within the range of his vision. Of rumour he had plenty, but so had we. Mesopotamia was, as far as the movements of Hampshire men were concerned, a trackless desert.

The first draft from the Southampton battalion reached Basra some time in the autumn of 1915, having left India on August 13th about 50 strong—all picked men, and volunteers—under Lieut. Needham. Some of them were in the Battle of Kut-el-Amara late in September, and there were others in the force which set forth to relieve Townshend and the Hampshiremen who were shut up in Kut. Other drafts from the 5th Battalion arrived from time to time, but the 6th and 7th Battalions did not reach the field till the following year.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Attempt to Relieve Kut. 1/4th Battalion

The biggest fight of the first part of the 1/4th Battalion's campaign (the first draft of the 1/5th being attached) was during the siege of Kut, the Hampshire men being part of General Aylmer's relieving force. The attacking force had a terrible gruelling as it was a frontal attack. One hundred-and-thirty-three British officers fell and other ranks suffered proportionately. But they "stuck it" in spite of the punishment and the heat and the flies and the floods. They came limping in afterwards, says Mr. Candler, with the splendid stoicism of the British soldier. "Beg pardon, sir," said one Hampshire private; can you tell me where the ambulance is. "Oh, I'm alright," he went on; "its nothing serious." Yet he was wounded in the arm, the head, and the stomach. "They took a bit off my gums," he said with complete nonchalance. One of the great difficulties of that intrepid body, apart from the fact that it was not sufficiently large for the purpose which it had in hand, was the truly appalling weather which prevailed. It was a terrible visitation, which caused untold suffering to the besieged, and even forced the investing army of the Turks to withdraw a couple of thousand yards to slightly dryer ground.

Hampshire losses were very serious in that desperate fighting of the end of January. The 1/4th and the draft of the 1/5th were engaged in the battle of Umm-el-Hannah in which the troops had to advance 2,000 yards over open ground under very heavy fire. Thus Mr. Candler in his book, "The Long Road to Baghdad";—A small batch of the Hampshires were seen to advance at a walking pace some 800 yards without taking cover. At 400 yards from the enemy one officer and two men were left. They walked calmly on until they were within 300 yards of the Turkish trenches when the officer fell. Nothing could have been more gloriously perverse. It was a kind of vicarious expiation. They must have been moved by an obscure sense that somebody ought to make good, and in a spirit of devotion they took upon themselves that awful chastisement. It was wrong-headed, but their utmost." The movement in general was the subject of report by General Younghusband. The advance had to be made, he said, over a perfectly open and badly swept area against sunken, loop-holed trenches in broad daylight, and their noble achievement is one of the highest. Of the draft of the 1/5th, Lieut. Needham was killed, nine wounded, and 13 missing. No one knew with any certainty concerning the fate of these. Some, no doubt, fell in action, and were buried by the Turks—it was established during the truce that this had been the case—some were taken prisoner, and in other instances the only record was that singularly distressing one "missing, presumed killed." Captain Palmer, son of the Earl of Selborne, whose family association with the Hampshire Regiment has been so close and so devoted, was one of those who died of wounds while in enemy hands. So it was with the men of the Winchester and district battalion, which, by the chances of recruitment, included many officers and men from Southampton and its neighbourhood.

The 1/4th, which received drafts at different times from the second line of the Winchester battalion, and also from the 1/5th, the 1/6th, the 1/7th, and the 2/7th, were kept pretty busy in road-making, etc., even when not actually fight-

ing. As a matter of fact, the casualties of the 1/4th were so heavy that their needs in the matter of drafts could not be met by the 2nd line of the battalion, which was the reason why the other Hampshire units were drawn upon. On one occasion, too, they were linked up with the Buffs, and as both regiments were tenacious on the point as to whether composite formation should be known as the Hants or the Buffs, they compromised on the "Huffs."

The building up of General Maude's army was a desperately difficult business, but upon it depended not only the future of the war situation in Mesopotamia, but the lives of the men already there. The desert provided nothing at all in the way of supply; scarcely anything of an efficient character in the way of transport. Everything for the satisfaction of human needs had to come in ships of which we had so few for all that was required of them, and when it was dumped at the base it had to go up river and then beyond, sometimes on mule-back. Even the water supply had on occasion to go that way. The improvisations which helped to win the war in the West were highly civilised contrivances in comparison with the things with which our Mesopotamian improvision had to make do. All these shifts were wonderful, but nothing in the story is so splendid as the improvisations of the Inland Water Transport. For them special craft were built in England and shipped to the twin rivers in sections, and there assembled. Others were adapted until the river fleets were the most heterogenious collection of shipping ever gathered together under one flag.

The armies were reorganised too during the interval of assembly. The 1/4th Hampshires ranks were filled up, and the command passed to Major Matthews, of the Durham L.I. The battalion was at Twin Canals during part of the summer of 1916, and then in the Sinn area, where the heat maintained itself steadily above 100 degrees, and the dust storms were an affliction almost beyond bearing. An expected respite in the shape of a period of rest at Amara was never realised. All this time the battalion, with the other waiting troops, was employed in general utility work; roadmaking, the destruction of old enemy works and the like, with occasional excitements in the way of demonstrations.

The Hampshires had an important part in the fighting in the Hai salient in midwinter, one Company being ordered forward in support of troops which had overshot their objective, but who instead of paying the all too frequent penalty of the over-zealous had been enabled thereby to enfilade the enemy and spoil a counter-attack which the Turks had promised themselves. The battalion went in and out of the line as required, having the experience once of seeing the enemy throw down their arms and yield themselves to captivity with joy. So the movement towards the Tigris continued. Meantime the men of the battalion were being trained in the management of the pontoons with which the river crossing was to be effected. As a matter of fact when the river was reached the Hampshiremen were in the first pontoons sent across. The whole of the vanguard of that movement suffered severely from Turkish machine-gunning and shell fire. The Hampshire pontoon experts rowed the Ghurkhas across, and had to land at a point only fifty yards from the very strongly held enemy positions.

CHAPTER XXX.

A Famous River Crossing. 1/4th Battalion

The general strategic idea of the movement was to dispossess the enemy of the advantageous position he held in a double bend of the river; within that conception was a piece of minor strategy connected with the crossing. It was desired to mask the real attempted landing, and the device used was that of sending across various pontoon parties of small strength at different points, the men being instructed to carry out the movement with a great deal of noise and a suggestion of inefficiency. These parties caused concentrations of enemy forces at varying points, and while the Turks were thus diffused the real landing was effected. This landing, counting its preliminaries and its other manifestations as a single operation,

was one of the finest episodes in the Mesopotamian campaign. Altogether, 230 men and five officers of the Hampshires were employed (on the volunteer principle) to get the Gurkhas across. This was necessary, because it was found to be impossible to teach the Indian hill-men to handle pontoons.

Here is the story as told by Mr. Candler: "The 1/2nd Gurkhas at No. 3 Ferry had an even hotter crossing. At this point the top of the bund was swept by a machine-gun from a house on the right, and the enemy had better cover. To realise the nature of the assault, one should think of the bund as the parapet of the enemy's trench; it was loop-holed and had head cover. The Gurkhas had to land within from fifteen to fifty yards of this and attack it; the gallant rowers —Hants men, most of them, with a section of the Burma sappers—had to land their draft and push off. The boats made the shore at set distances apart. There was no quick shoulder-to-shoulder rush to stimulate elan. Each landing was an individual piece of initiative and heroism, gallantry in cold blood. Judged by any other standard than that of mere bulk, it was as great a thing as the landing at Helles, and it will be as historic. One could read the story afterwards in the mud. Wherever a keel had scored the Turkish shore, there were Gurkha dead, and dead Hants rowers, who had been lifted from the boats. In the face of all opposition the two regiments established a footing on the north bank. But as one by one the rowers were killed or wounded and the boats stranded or drifted downstream, Ferries 2 and 3 had to be abandoned. Before 7 a.m., 110 out of 230 of the Hants rowers had been hit.. ." This and the victory in the Hai salient were in a sense decisive, for the retreat began in earnest.

In the fighting at Dahra Ridge Colonel Matthews, the Hampshire's C.O., was wounded slightly. The Battalion suffered pretty heavily on this occasion, losing one officer killed and ten wounded and over 300 N.C.O.'s and men killed, wounded or missing. Quite 50 per cent. were killed or missing. The river fleet was able to take a hand in the game, acting in concert with the two columns which were wearing down the Turkish resistance so finely. They forced their way up the river, and put the enemy in a position of such peril that he fled, leaving valuable stores and equipment behind, including, so great was his hurry, a field P.O. and very many guns.

In the course of the early part of the march to the capital the Division, of which the Hampshires formed part, had the experience of a 23 miles' forced march in an effort to cut off the retreating Turks, but the enemy was able to extricate himself from a ticklish position in the bend of the river. Then the march, a triumph by this time, proceeded. It was anything but easy going, owing to the dense clouds of dust which moving troops always and inevitably produce in the East, and there were little matters connected with the Commissariat, which were not always easy of adjustment. But the battalion had a wonderful quartermaster, who was able by the exercise of that measure of ingenuity which seems to belong especially to quartermasters from Moses down to date, to make quite a decent show in a land which certainly did not flow with milk and honey. Once more on the way, the battalion passed Ctesiphon, but by this time the Turks were in full retreat on the Baghdad road. This time it was unoccupied, though very plainly it had been intended to make it a point of the strongest resistance had the circumstances been more favourable. At one point the battalion was well in advance of the general forward movement, and was in action again. They formed part of a small column sent up the River Diala to force a crossing if possible and to disclose the enemy. Lack of water proved a fiercer enemy than the Turk. Finding that the enemy held a strong position and was in considerable force, orders were received by the Hampshires to withdraw to an earlier bivouac. Thus it was not to the Hampshires that the honour fell of being the first battalion into Baghdad. But the 1/4th got there a few days later and had a spell of garrison duty in the city of the Caliphs, policing the city and generally helping to subdue the excitement which prevailed immediately after the occupation.

CHAPTER XXXI.—Baghdad. 1/6th Battalion

The 1/6th Hampshires reached the field from India in the autumn of 1917, and was in the neighbourhood of Bagdad at Christmas. They had a taste of real service soon afterwards in dealing with an Arab tribe which had kicked over the traces near Nezef on the Euphrates, and stood in need of a little wholesome correction. Thus they marched over the site of the Tower of Babel and the place where Babylon once was, being, I rather gather, the first British body of troops in that neighbourhood. The recalcitrant ones had repented of their temerity by the time the Portsmouth men arrived, and there was nothing to be done in the way of fighting. Whereforth a return to Baghdad was ordered. Subsequently, they had what in France was called a tour of trench duty in the neighbourhood of Alajik, but beyond minor operations had a small chance of distinguishing themselves, though there was every expectation at the time that the enemy would be brought to fight. There were, it would appear, several of these false alarms in the experience of the "Sixth," but it was a perfectly natural consequence of what had gone before. The truth, of course, was that the back of the enemy had been broken in Mesopotamia, and if by rapid movement and guerilla methods he could avoid a direct issue, it was obviously sound policy from his point of view to do so. However, the chance came at last. The battalion was in action heavily at Fathah, and made a very meritorious advance, though under galling fire.

The battalion duly consolidated their gains, and remained in situation for several days. But the enemy went off again one dark night. Constant marching, railway building, hardships, and shortage of those things which made life slightly more tolerable in France, went to make up the experience of the "Sixth" during the final months of their stay east of Suez. They even had a spell of prisoner guarding and sorting, and finished up by being employed in the destruction and dismantling of defences. Demobilisation and the return to India of part of the force brings this portion of the story to a close. During the whole of the active service portion of the 1/6th Battalion's war experiences, it was commanded by Col. Archibald Wyatt, who had occupied every rank in the battalion upward from private in the old Volunteer days to the command of the battalion in the field.

CHAPTER XXXII.—PALESTINE.

Second Battle of Gaza. 1/8th Battalion

Two battalions of Hampshire Territorials served in the romantic crusade which began with the defence of Egypt and of the Canal zone in particular, and ended so gloriously in the freeing of the Holy Land and the capture of Jerusalem, followed in time by the overthrow of misrule in the whole of Syria, and the setting up of a stable system. None of the regular or service Battalions of the County Regiment were at any time part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, the formations which served under Sir John Maxwell, Sir A. Murray, and Lord Allenby, but the 1/8th Battalion, the I.W. Rifles, commanded by Col. J. E. Rhodes (who, however, left the Battalion at the Dardanelles) and the second line of the 5th Hampshires (which went to India and later to Egypt, when the army there was built up after the evacuation of the Dardanelles), and the 2/4th Battalion were so engaged.

The Islanders were nearer. They had taken part, suffering very grievously in the Dardanelles operations, and were moved to Egypt with the large formation which was gathered at Alexandria. They were attached to the 163rd Brigade of the 54th Division, to which belongs the distinction of being the only infantry division to fight all through the Palestine campaign unchanged in their order of battle.

It was an extraordinarily difficult business this gathering together of a great instrument of attack from the remains of the Dardanelles army, from home, from the East, and from the standing forces in the Protectorate. "Every day, for six weeks," wrote General Murray in his despatch, "ship loads of troops, guns, animals, and transport, were arriving at Alexandria and Port Said. The component parts of this mass had to be disentangled and forwarded to their proper

destinations; old units had to be reorganized; new units to be created; brigades, divisions, and army corps, to be reformed." The first business of the new force when it was equipped and ready, before, indeed, it was ready, related to the defence of the Canal. There were a quarter of a million Turks gathered in Southern Syria with the cutting of the link with Egypt as its object. Egypt, at that time, obsessed the German official mind; it was the successor to the Mittel Europa theory which had begun to wear a little thin. Wherefore, it was on the Canal and in the Canal zone that everything was concentrated.

But it was soon apparent to the General Commanding-in-Chief, that following the construction of railways, pipe lines, and roads (in six months 114 miles of roads, 154 miles of pipe lines, and 252 miles of railway were laid), the real base for the defence of Egypt was a forward position in enemy country which had first to be cleared of the enemy by sudden raids of small bodies of mounted troops and constant harassment from the air. The preparations for the advance were greatly complicated by the turbulent activity of the Senoussi and other native forces, who played their age-long game of hanging on to the outskirts of positions and inflicting what damage they could upon weakly held posts. This might not have been so seriously regarded but for the immense effect upon the natives of the interior of a temporary and partial success against white troops. The Senoussi were crushed in time by Sir John Maxwell and co-ordination of the whole of the forces in Egypt took place, and it was possible to give undivided attention to the ever-increasing army of Turks massing near Sinai for purposes which were not at that time clear.

It soon became apparent, however, that if the Turk was to be brought to battle, it would be necessary to go to him across the desert, an operation of immense difficulty, because of the absence of water and the difficulty of maintaining communications and supply. There were no roads in the first place, and the presence of frequent steep banks rendered the use of wheeled transport difficult. There were pack animals in quantity, but so barren was the country, so poor at that time the transport facilities in the forward area beyond the point to which railhead had been pushed, that 30,000 animals were required to maintain only a portion of the advanced troops in reasonable supplies of water, food, and ammunition.

Still the enemy gathered, being convinced of the menace of the advance, and determined at all costs to hold the Gaza Beersheba line, which was immensely strong, Gaza being described by General Allenby as a "modern fortress, heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for protracted defence."

The 8th Hampshires reached the front first in the Syrian campaign, being part of the organisation which effected the wonderful desert crossing. In the first battle of Gaza the Battalion was in reserve, but very shortly afterwards was heavily in action near the same place, and had very severe losses. Many Island officers and men fell in the terrific assaults which General Murray delivered, but which, unhappily. failed to yield the victory which was so earnestly sought, and which, if achieved, would have brought about the immediate dispersal of the Turkish forces near the sea, and would have opened up the road to Jerusalem at the same time.

Lieut. C. Seely, son of Sir Charles Seely, fell in one of these engagements. Let me tell the story in detail, because it gives a picture of a great incident in Island war story, and shows how gallantly the Riflemen met the tremendous difficulties which confronted them. He was, says an eyewitness, bringing his company up to the front line, just won from the enemy, and there was rather heavy shelling. He told his men to lie down, and he went forward to find a place for them. He shouted to them with his happy smiling face: "Now don't mistake me for a German when I come back to fetch you." "No fear, sir," they shouted back. Soon after he was hit by shrapnel in the chest, just over the heart; he would not let the stretcher-bearers carry him at first, and insisted on walking to the dressing station some distance. But the wound was mortal, and he soon passed away. The last his men saw of him was with a smile on his lips, waving a hand to them. He set a great example to all, meeting death with a happy smile at the head of his men, with his face to the enemy.

After the second battle of Gaza, there was a period of stagnation, not complete, but an absence of movement. The situation, stabilized as it were, into trench warfare. But there were raiding incidents full of adventure and glory, which sapped at the enemy moral, disclosed his dispositions, and kept the hand of the British troops in for the bigger attack which was being prepared. For one of these, on Beach Post, the 8th Hampshires were responsible, and as a result the entire enemy garrison was either killed or captured.

B Company, under the command at that time of Lieut. Brannon, took part in one of these raids. The officer in charge was awarded the M.C. in recognition of his bravery, and that the D.C.M. was conferred on C.-S.-M. Mark Graham, and the M.M. on Sergts. Brittan, W. Early, and Wheeler, of Newport, B. S. Gray, of Shanklin, and Lance-Sergt. T. Palmer and Rifleman H. Hawes and F. Adams.

The Battalion was in the line thereafter until July of 1917, and moved forward with the 54th Division in the great series of sweeping and encircling movements by which General Allenby imposed his will upon the Turks, broke through their lines, forced them to flee north and west, and finally captured Jerusalem, making his final dramatic victory a certainty.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Gaza-Beersheba Line. 2/5th Battalion

It will help in the understanding of the part of the 2/5th Hampshires in the Palestine fighting if a brief summary of the strategical situation at or about the time of their entry into the war in that field is given.

"The Turkish Army in Southern Palestine" said Lord Allenby "held a strong position extending from the sea at Gaza, roughly along the main Gaza-Beersheba road to Beersheba. Gaza had been made into a strong modern fortress heavily entrenched and wired, offering every facility for a protracted defence. The remainder of the enemies' lines consisted of a series of strong localities . . . trench systems and groups of works. These groups of works were generally from 1,500 to 2,000 yards apart . . . The enemies' force was on a wide front, the distance from Gaza to Beersheba being about 30 miles, but his lateral communications were good, and any threatened part of the line could be very quickly reinforced. My force was extended on a front of 22 miles, from the sea opposite Gaza, to Gamli. Owing to lack of water" Lord Allenby explains, "I was unable without preparations which would require some considerable time, to approach within striking distance of the enemy, except in the small sector near the sea coast opposite Gaza."

Lord Allenby's plan was to secure possession of Beersheba, partly in order to get the benefit of the water supply at that place, and partly because its fall would provide the Army with an open flank in which full use could be made of the British superiority in mounted troops.

The main operations were on the Hareira-Seria line, but alongside that in order to keep the enemy guessing, preparations were made also to attack at Gaza, a business in which the Fleet were to co-operate.

Meanwhile the enemy were adding to their strength in that area of warfare, and it was apparent that the fighting which was to come in Palestine was to be more serious, if possible, than that which had gone before.

Having endeavoured to suggest in the briefest possible way what the issue was (a glance at a war map of the area will make it clearer still) I propose to tell the story of the 2/5th Battalion's fighting in detail, indicating where it is possible, its relation to the story of the main operations.

Life with the 2/5th Hampshires had been uneventful in India. There had been the usual spells of hard training—Kitchener tests and the like—the furnishing of drafts, a little sport, and the usual regimental round. The fact that the Battalion was always intact at Secunderabad—D Company were at Madras for a time, and B Company subsequently—and able to train as a unit, was a factor in their selection for active service, and it was a fine body of men which Lieut.-Colonel Campbell Day embarked at Bombay on March 22nd, 1917. The voyage too, was uneventful. Aden was reached on March 30th. Aden was one of the very subsidiary side shows, but not without its importance in the harassment of Turk and hostile Arab, and not without its interest for us because one of the Bournemouth Battalions fought long and gallantly there under trying circumstances. Suez was reached at 6 a.m. on April 5th.

The Battalion was entrained during the afternoon of the same day, and reached Moascar Camp, Ismailia at 5.30. At Ismailia, one of the great gathering places

of the Egyptian force nearly a month was spent, in general fitting out, the gathering of horses, Lewis guns, rifles, and equipment.

In the meantime many of the officers and N.C.O.'s of the Battalion were sent to Zeitoun for special courses in Lewis gunnery, range finding, bombing, and the like. Zietoun was a truly wonderful improvisation, and is deserving of more than passing mention. It was the headquarters of the Imperial School of Instruction. Everything was centred there after a time though it had a small beginning. Every branch of warfare under the new conditions were taught there, and several thousands of officers and N.C.O.'s passed through and out. In addition to the items of training already mentioned there were courses at Zietoun for artillery, Stokes gun and the two branches of the signal service. Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. E. M. Colston was its most famous Commandant. The Hampshires made full use of their opportunities in this regard. There were, as a matter of fact, only two failures among those who went up.

The 2/5th Hampshires were part of the 232nd Brigade (Brig.-General Huddleston), which was one of the brigades of the 75th Division (Major-General Palin). It began its move forward early in May, leaving Moascar on the 8th, and arriving at El Arish on the 11th, being employed there on the lines of communication. The Battalion was moved to Deir el Belah in June, and was marched thence to Wadi Reuben, arriving there by night. There the Battalion was split up. Headquarters and A Company were attached to the 4th Norfolks; B and half of C Company to the 5th Norfolks; and D and half of C Company to 8th Hampshires (temporarily joining the 163rd Brigade), the purpose of the transfer being that the troops should have the opportunity to learn trench warfare in the company of seasoned soldiers—seasoned, that is, to the peculiarities of fighting in those latitudes—and also to be available for reinforcing purposes if found necessary. On June 11th, the Battalion was moved to the quaintly-named Regent's Park, and there bivouacked, and on the following day took over a section of the front line trenches in front of Gaza.

There was nothing in the way of strenuous fighting about this time. Lord Allenby was not yet prepared for his great sweeping movement. It was still a war of position with the British constantly testing the enemy strength; seeking local improvements of terrain, taking part in raids for the gathering of information and the shaking of the Turkish morale.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—Brown Hill. 2/5th Battalion

Two days after taking up trench positions the Battalion sustained its first casualty, the M.O., Capt. Glass (some time one of the Assistant Medical Officers of Health at Southampton), being wounded on June 14th. Practical stagnation with the interludes before-mentioned, was maintained for a month exactly. On July 14th, there was a full-sized raid on Beach Post, in which 180 men of D Company of the 2/5ths, and 100 men of the 8th Battalion, took part. It was entirely successful, brilliant even. The Hampshires had one man killed and four wounded. Coy.-Sergt.-Major Graham won the D.C.M. for his gallantry on this occasion, and Corpl. Wells and Ptes. Goddard and Burgess were awarded the Military Medal.

Early in August, the Battalion had a stroke of ill-luck, Lieut.-Col. Campbell Day, who had taken the 2/5ths out, who had trained them so efficiently in India, and had taken the unit thence to Egypt and to Palestine ready to a man for the line, being invalided. It was a sore disappointment to the C.O. and to all ranks that he should be denied the privilege of leading his own men into action in the big operations which every day were getting nearer. The command devolved on Col. H. A. Vernon, K.R.R. He, however, held it for a brief space only (the Battalion being meanwhile in Divisional Reserve), for in October he was promoted to the command of a Brigade, and the new C.O. appointed on October 1st, was once more a Southampton man. He was Lieut.-Col. G. F. Perkins, son of Col. E. K. Perkins, C.B.E., the Vice-Chairman of the Territorial Association, to which all the Hampshire Territorials owed allegiance. It was an appointment which was popular with all ranks, for the new Colonel had served with the greatest distinction with the 1st (Regular) Battalion of the County Regiment in the early days of the war in the West, being Adjutant during the horrors of Le Cateau and thereafter. Subsequently he was sent to

Egypt, where he was G.S.O. (1) to General Lynden Bell, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, in which post he had won much honour and the reputation for efficiency in important staff work.

Lord Allenby had everything ready for the great advance by the end of October. The bombardment of the Gaza defences began on the 27th of the month, the warships assisting; but the main attack upon that place was to be dependent upon the success which attended the attempt at the other end of the line, at Beersheba, vital from the point of the view of water supply, and because its fall would leave the Turkish flank *in the air*.

Everything went well in that sector, works of tremendous strength falling, as a matter of fact, with greater ease than was expected. The Turks were practically rushed off their feet by the London troops and the Yeomanry, and before they had time to recover, Beersheba had fallen.

The purpose of the attack on Gaza, which was to follow, was to draw hostile reserves upon that place, and the position of the Division of which the Hampshires formed part in these general operations was the Mansurah area. On November 6th and 7th, the 232nd Brigade captured the Labyrinth Ali Muntar, and occupied the quarry and Delilah's Neck by 1.30. At some points in the advance it was found that the enemy had retired during the night. This was the case with the objectives of the East Anglian troops, with whom the Hampshires had been co-operating.

As a consequence, the main force attacking Gaza was able to occupy the Northern and Eastern defences of the city without much difficulty. Ali Muntar, where the Hampshires were, was still under fire from the Turkish positions, however. The advance was not everywhere so easy. London troops had a gruelling time at Tel el Sheira, which they captured by a brilliant bayonet charge at 4 o'clock in the morning. Afterwards they were fiercely counter-attacked. At several points the enemy rear-guard put up the firmest kind of defence, and a strong attempt was made to cut off the troops so occupied. It did not wholly succeed; but at Huj there was a fine charge by the Worcester and Warwick Yeomanry, by which twelve guns were captured, and the spirit of the enemy engaged on guarding the retreat was broken.

Meantime, it became apparent from the observations of the R.F.C. that the moment for striking a heavy blow seemed to be indicated. Mounted troops were accordingly pushed forward with orders to harry the retreating troops relentlessly. But they were soon up against the natural difficulties of the terrain. The body of British troops detailed for this business of paralysing the retreat was determined by the question of supply, and not less by that of water. The latter was occasionally found, but oftentimes the machinery of the wells was damaged, and delay occurred.

The 232nd Brigade advanced north on the 9th of November, and on the following day occupied Suafir el Gabiyeh. About this time there was a stiffening observed in the character of the resistance, it being apparent that the British troops were no longer in contact with rearguards, but were faced by the main Turkish army in this area.

One of the chief handicaps of the attacking troops was the thirst which assailed them. The winds of Palestine were at all times hot and singularly exhausting, and at this time—early November—were especially so. On the 12th the Hampshires were linked with the 2/3rd Ghurkas in an attack on Burkah and Brown Hill, which was wholly successful. This was preparatory to a big attack on Junction Station, a vital point, in regard to which there were difficulties because the troops were operating 35 miles from the railhead, and the distribution of munitions and supplies began to be a problem of a vexatious character. But the transport services met all these demands, and even managed to bring up a couple of heavy batteries in support of the infantry.

Here is the story of the engagement as it appeared in General Allenby's despatch:

"The advanced guard of the 52nd (Lowland) Division had forced its way almost to Burkah on the 11th, on which day also some mounted troops pushed across the Nahr Sukereir at Jisr Esdud, where they held a bridge-head. During the 12th the Yeomanry pushed north up the left bank of the Nahr Suhereir, and eventually seized Tel el Murreh on the right bank near the mouth.

"The hostile commander may have hoped to exercise some moral effect on our plans by the presence of the southern portion of his forces on the flank of our advance; if so, he was mistaken. The Australian Mounted troops, extended over a wide front, not only secured this flank, but pressed forward on the 12th towards Balin, Berkusie, and Tel es Safi. Their advanced troops were counter-attacked

and driven back a short distance, but the enemy made no effort to press further forward. Arrangements were then made to attack on the 13th.

"The country over which the attack took place is open and rolling, dotted with small villages surrounded by mud walls with plantations of trees outside the walls. The most prominent feature is the line of heights on which are the villages of Katrah and El Mughar, standing out above the low flat ground which separates them from the rising ground to the west, on which stands the village of Beshshit, about 2,000 yards distant. This Katrah-El Mughar line forms a very strong position, and it was here that the enemy made his most determined resistance against the turning movement directed against his right flank. The capture of this position by the 52nd (Lowland) Division, assisted by a most dashing charge of mounted troops, who galloped across the plain under heavy fire and turned the enemy's position from the north, was a fine feat of arms. Some 1,100 prisoners, 3 guns, and many machine guns were taken here. After this the enemy resistance weakened, and by the evening his forces were retiring east and north."

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Great Sweeping Movement. 2/5th Battalion

The Hampshires were in the 232nd Brigade, which was co-operating with the 52nd Division. Advancing from Yasur, they pushed back the Turkish rearguards covering the Junction Station, capturing 292 prisoners and seven guns. The action was decisive; was indeed the culminating point of a movement which practically broke the Turkish defence of the Holy Land. In fifteen days the British troops had advanced sixty miles on its right and forty on its left, as the General recorded. "It had driven a Turkish Army of nine Infantry Divisions and one Cavalry Division out of a position in which it had been entrenched for six months, and had pursued it, giving battle whenever it attempted to stand, and inflicting on it losses amounting probably to nearly two-thirds of the enemy's original effectives. Over 9,000 prisoners, about eighty guns, more than 100 machine guns, and very large quantities of ammunition and other stores had been captured."

The fleeing army was cut in two, and it appeared likely that the occupation of Jerusalem would be achieved after all without great opposition. Still the great sweeping movement—as fine a strategic conception as the whole story of the war furnishes—continued. There were delays while the railway was being pushed up, but they were put to use in the business of general consolidation, and then the march went on again. On Nov. 19 the Brigade (General Huddleston's) captured Amwas and Latron by noon, and pushed on through difficult and hilly country in the face of considerable opposition to within a mile of Saris. On the following day the Hampshires and the 58th Rifles were detailed for the envelopment of Saris, and the storming of the position was carried out by the 2/4th Somersets. On the 21st the Brigade captured Kustul. There was also severe fighting near Nebysamwill on the 22nd, and at Elgil on the following day, in both of which the Hampshires were involved.

The enemy contested every step of the way with determination, and about this time was able to gather up reinforcements from somewhere, a situation which confirmed the Command in the view that the limit of the capacity of the drive had been reached, and that the next move forward would need special preparation. The 75th Division, of which the Hampshires then formed part, had been pushed up at a tremendous pace, and had reached a point only about six miles from Jerusalem, holding a strong position. This was the point, however, at which the relief plan came into operation, and the Hampshires, with the other units of the hard-marching 75th Division, were denied the satisfaction of completing their work by an entry into Jerusalem. The 232nd Brigade was relieved by the 179th Brigade, and the Divisional relief was the 60th (London) Division, the famous Division to which Lord Allenby made enthusiastic reference when he came home as the captor of Jerusalem. But we shall always remember with pride that it was the Division to which the 2/5th Hampshires were attached, who made the pace and opened the road.

Thereafter the Hampshires had no very prominent part in the movement on the Holy City. They had indeed a comparatively quiet time, the winter being occupied in refitting. In the meantime Jerusalem had fallen, and by the time our men came into the picture again the armies were engaged in following up the split Turkish army, driving one section north and the other west towards the forces of the Sherif Feisal based on Akaba.

On March 12 the Hampshires were at Wadi Ballut, and later at Darkulah. Early in April they were heavily engaged again. This was at El Kefr Sheik Nafukh, in the centre of difficult hill country. One eminence was named Toogood Hill, after Captain Toogood, of the 2/5ths, who was wounded while holding the top. Berukin and Tin Hat Hill were stormed by the 2/3rd Ghurkas, the 2/5th Hampshires, and the 2/4th Somersets in the teeth of considerable opposition. It was a sudden and unexpected flare up, involving the whole Brigade.

The Hampshires suffered rather severely from snipers—German as well as Turkish. Their positions were overlooked by the enemy, who held the higher ground, and were able to pour machine-gun and trench-mortar fire upon the Hampshires, the position of the latter under this scourge, to say nothing of the work of the individual enthusiasts sheltered among the rocks, rendering their situation singularly unhealthy. At some points the enemy were only thirty yards distant, and had a greatly superior elevation at that. Still the Hampshire men tried desperately to maintain their perilous position in advance of Toogood Hill, company after company being sent up the slopes so completely dominated. But it could not be maintained.

The troops withdrew following a counter-attack to Toogood Hill, and on the following day the Brigade was relieved.

In that incident the Hampshires lost three officers and 15 other ranks killed, one officer and 29 other ranks missing, and nine officers and 86 other ranks wounded. Also they won much honour. Colonel Perkins was awarded the D.S.O., and the following gained the D.C.M.: R.S.M. Cousens, Privates H. Cole and Braby; Lance-Corporal Gray and Private Turner won the Military Medal. R.S.M. Cousens was subsequently awarded the French Croix de Guerre. The act of gallantry which won recognition for Pte. Cole consisted in going out into a position swept by Turkish machine-gun fire and bringing in wounded. He did it repeatedly with the greatest unconcern, and was in the estimation of everyone who saw him a very brave and gallant soldier.

Almost immediately after this engagement another change in command took place, Colonel Perkins returning to England to take up a War Office post, and the regiment being taken over by Lieutenant-Colonel A. French Blake. There was more fighting in the neighbourhood before the month was out, the Turks making an attempt to dispossess the Hampshires of their hold on Toogood Hill. It was, however, beaten off with the aid of Somerset troops.

Soon after this, following an order for the disbandment of second line units, the Hampshires were absorbed by the Wiltshire Regiment. There was a good deal of disappointment over this, but it was impossible to maintain the battalion at full strength. The wastage had been such that by the middle of summer the 2/5th had been reduced in efficient strength to 250 bayonets. The call upon the reserves at home and the needs of the Armies of the West were the determining factor no doubt in the decision not to replenish the ranks, but it was sorely disappointing. The Ghurkas, with whom the 2/5ths had been comrades in arms for so long, shared the chagrin of the Hampshiremen, and were very ready with their sympathy. The 2/4th Battalion of the County Regiment, which also served in Palestine, had the luck to meet with fewer casualties, and as a consequence were able to proceed as a unit to France—they were the only Hampshire Territorials to do so as a battalion—and there they won much honour, as I have already shown, in the Rheims sector.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—SALONIKA. Pip Ridge

10th and 12th Battalions

With the serving soldier the Salonika expedition exceeded in unpopularity all the side-shows of the war. It represented to him banishment; it seemed, rather unreasonably, the negation of glory; it certainly was a singularly difficult place to get away from, and no less certainly it was an exceedingly uncomfortable place in which to dwell.

Yet there were moments in which the eyes of the whole world were turned upon the operations of the Salonika Army, when the task laid upon it seemed not only to promise military distinction in full measure, but a place in the sun in regard to the decisive issue of the war. Those were the days in which there appeared to be at least a possibility of reaching the weak points of the alliance of the Central Powers by way of the back-door, but it never materialised.

The Salonika Army, which included at the beginning the 10th Hampshires, was transferred thence from Suvla, Sir Charles Monro being in command of the forces in the Mediterranean east of Malta, and Sir B. Mahon of the Salonika portion of the army. The 10th Division was the first to land, but it did not do so intact consequent on its severe losses at Gallipoli. Two other divisions followed quickly, and thereafter other reinforcements. The purpose of the force was to support, and when that failed to rescue, if possible, the Serbian Army then being driven across the hills by the German reinforced Bulgarian Army.

Following the well-remembered surrender of the Greek commander, Colonel Christodoulos, French troops were moved against the Bulgars, a Hampshire battalion, which had suffered intensely from malaria, being included in the force. The battles were especially trying in the foothills, that at Jenikoj particularly. That was a battle in which the attacking troops, pressing for a sure foothold in Bulgaria, and charged with the task of keeping the Bulgars occupied and holding the road to the East at the same time, had matters pretty much their own way at first, but the Bulgar counter-attack was indescribably fierce.

The Hampshire men had no great share in the earlier fighting, being employed on supply, never an easy job, and in Salonika a singularly difficult one.

From the first this task had handicapped the British command. Everything, troops, munitions, and supply generally, had in the early stages to be moved up a single track of railway (which was also shared by the French and used by the local population). Then there was the heat in summer and the intense cold of winter, and in between the most tempestuous storms, which turned the rivers into raging torrents. And by way of variety there was more or less constant air raiding by all sorts of aircraft, and even Zeppelins. One of the latter, attempting an attack upon Salonika, was brought down in flames quite close to the Hampshire lines. These torments of every imaginable sort called for counter measures in equal variety. One of the stunts of the Hampshire men concerned the discoloration of tents, so that they might not be visible to night raiders. There was a subsidiary campaign carried on by the ingenious sanitary services against that special curse of life in the Balkans—the common fly. Even the drinking water had to be treated with chloride of lime, with easily imagined results, before it could be used.

Malaria was the special scourge, and the only relief from it was the cold weather. But the anti-malaria measures were thoroughly efficient; swamps were drained and pestiferous streams canalised, and general instruction in field sanitation given, the result being a considerable reduction in the mortality from this cause.

For a whole year the British held a ninety-mile line, covering Salonika and extending from the Struma to the Vardar, besides detaching a brigade for service on the Gulf of Salonika, with scarcely any movement. As General Milne said in one of his despatches, the situation placed a considerable strain upon the endurance of the troops, especially during the winter months, when, owing to the unprecedented rainfall, the mountain roads became almost impassable. The troops were without relief for this space of time, and had only limited opportunities of training, but in spite of these factors, and, as the General pointed out, without the encouraging effects of offensive action, a very high standard of efficiency was maintained.

But the inactivity was not, in spite of appearances, a permanent condition. Later on the 12th Battalion—a service formation

—was in the very thick of the fighting at Pip Ridge. There was constant shelling from the hills, and at intervals intensive bombardment from the British guns in preparation for attacks or as feints. The Hampshires were not involved in the big attack on Dorian, being employed with the other units of the Division in holding the line from Pip Ridge to the Vardar. But they came into the show before long, being ordered to take White Scar Hill—this was in the middle of September, 1918. It was not a big operation. A single company was detailed for the purpose, but the Hampshire men had a terrific time during the counter-attack, every available Bulgar gun being turned on the position. But they held on, and earned warm praise from the Divisional and Brigade commanders. It was the last big "show." The Bulgars were preparing for their dramatic surrender by blowing up dumps and destroying positions. Soon the order to advance came, but the end was very near. It came, as the world knows, in the early autumn of 1918 with the unconditional surrender of Tsar Ferdinand's Army.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—ITALY. 15th Battalion

The Hampshire Regiment was represented in Italy by a service battalion, one of two which were recruited in the Portsmouth area. They formed part of the 41st Division, which was assembled in the autumn of 1917 for service in Italy after the debacle, which nearly, but not quite, allowed the Austrians, reinforced by Germans, to capture Venice and spend the winter in the Lombardy Plain. The Hampshires' stay in the foothills was not a lengthy one, for with the stiffening which Sir Herbert Plumer and the 41st Division, together with the French troops, provided, the Italians were able within a month or two to regain control of the situation. Thus, though they reached Italy in the autumn of the year mentioned, the 15th Battalion was back again in France in the February following, being recalled for the German push on the Somme. But though the Hampshires had no opportunity of the kind of bitter fighting of the continuous order which fell to them in France, their experiences in Italy tried them considerably.

The place of the British troops in the damaged Italian battle line was one of the most vital consequence. They held the Montello sector which, as General Plumer pointed out in his despatch, acted as a hinge to the whole Italian line; it was the junction between the northern part in the hills and the defensive line of the Piave covering Venice. The early part of the campaign was occupied in dealing with local attacks on the Grappa and Asiago sectors, and as these developed the situation was one of much anxiety for the British and Italian commands. But it began to improve after Christmas, and from that point control was in some degree re-established.

The troops had some bitter experiences on the Piave. Cross-river raids were a constant occurrence. The Hampshires had on all the fronts exceptional experience of river fighting from Asia to the northernmost front of all in Russia, but for physical difficulty the fighting on the Piave was probably the worst. The river, in flood, was 1,000 yards wide, and had a 14 knot current. This latter factor and the presence of shallows, made the use of any floating craft impossible. Wherefore troops on reconnaissance and raid duty had to wade the river. It was midwinter, apart from the immense difficulty of dealing with an enemy on the hither bank of an inland sea of that sort, but some notable successes were won. It says something for the splendid condition of the men that in the General's view the health of the men, battle-tried in France before they crossed the mountains, was improved by their stay in Italy. This was partly due to the excellence of the work of those departments whose duty it is to maintain fitness. One of the specialities of the Piave fighting was an arrangement by which every man engaged in wading operations was upon emerging from the water placed in hot blankets.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—AFGHAN FRONTIER.

India and Burma. 1/5th Battalion

As everyone knows, the 1/5th Hampshires were out of luck throughout the whole period of the war in the matter of opportunities for distinction, and yet few Territorial Battalions have so admirable a record of usefulness or so good a name for the efficient carrying out of necessary, if humdrum, duties. It was always ready; frequently in reserve for important duties, and on several occasions only just missed the chance of glory. The 1/5th was a well-travelled unit; it served all over India from Burma to the Frontier; indeed, one of the officers of the Corps told me that he had travelled 25,000 miles in India, and several men detached for special duty—the 1/5th were the handymen of the white troops in India—must have done even more. The average for officers and men was probably in excess of 10,000 miles.

During the early part of the war the battalion was split up for duty—a company here, another there, and a third somewhere else. They were only gathered together as a complete battalion in the early part of 1916, when their stations were Fyzabad and Agra. Thence they were sent for garrison duty to Burma, becoming from that time a special mobile unit ready for instant service anywhere. Previously they had been called upon to find drafts for service in Mesopotamia, and reference has already been made to the gallantry of these men, and the ill-luck which attended them in the swamps on the road to Kut. The story of the 1/5th in Burma was cut short by the need in India and in the fighting areas of the East for seasoned troops. The Lieutenant-Governor found himself able to dispense with one battalion, and the Hampshires were set free for general service again. The expectation was that they would be sent to Vladivostok for service in Siberia, but this did not happen, the battalion detailed being the 1/9th Hampshires. On returning to the Indian Garrison the 1/5th went to Calcutta, where they were bivouacked on the Maidan at Fort William, the presence of white troops being necessary because of the incidence of the Hindu feast day Dussera, and the Mahommedan festival Mohurrum, a great and solemn occasion to the followers of the Prophet. There are always possibilities in these occasions, and the presence of the 1/5th was designed to prevent too great a demonstration of rival enthusiasm. A company had a similar experience at Delhi.

After Calcutta Umbala. Here the 1/5th were attached to the Umbala Independent Brigade, a formation instantly ready for service anywhere. A detachment went from Kasauli to Simla during one period of anxiety to guard the Army headquarters.

Soon afterwards they tasted active service, though their share in the frontier fighting was brief, and not very exciting. The Southampton men were the white troops in the 63rd Mobile Brigade commanded by Brigadier-General Macquoid, who had been commanding troops operating in the Chin Hills, and the function of this force was to be in readiness for service at any point on the Peshawar Kohat and Bannu line. The battalion reached Kohat on May 31st, at 11.30, going into bivouac until the following morning. Once there was a surprise attack from the hills on Thal. The Hampshires were ordered forward to the relief of this post, but by the time they had reached Kohat—railhead as far as the broad-gauge was concerned—the place had been relieved, or rather the tribesmen had retired once more to their fastnesses in the hills. It was a curious little piece of hill fighting, marked by some extremely lucky artillery work from the Afghan troops. With only half a dozen shots they hit the wireless station, the railway station, the hospital, and a supply dump. They had also captured a locomotive. A brigade, too, had been cut off about a day's march beyond Thal, but it was relieved two or three days later. I want to include here an account of the stay of the 1/5th Battalion on the frontier which has been sent me by one who was there:

"We did not move up on Sunday, June 1st, as expected, owing to the non-arrival of supplies, etc., and a few days later cholera broke out in Kohat, so, of course, it was impossible to move troops then. On Tuesday, June 3rd, the regiment shifted from camp into New McQueen's Barracks, about a mile to the north of Kohat Fort. They were native lines, but as they were not quite complete had never been occupied by troops.

"And now our bad time came along. The water supply was very short indeed, and this with the thermometer registering anything between 110 and 122 degrees was not at all pleasant. Vegetables, etc., were very scarce indeed, and the only thing in the food line that was at all plentiful was Australian jam."

While at Kohat the Hampshires had experience of the tip-and-run tactics of the Orakzais and Zaimukhts, tribesmen of the Pathan family. Once or twice the battalion was raided at night and fired upon, but the hillmen did not know that it was a white battalion that they had to deal with, and as soon as they made the discovery they retired in a hurry, the Hampshire casualties being precisely nil. But these and their other experiences—the business of putting a proper fear of the law into the badmashes of the foothills—were interesting and valuable to the Hampshiremen, who were able to put to practical use the lessons they had learned in the mountain training courses which had been part of their general fighting equipment.

It was while they were on the frontier that the Hampshires had to meet another enemy—cholera. The first case occurred on June 8th, 1919, the outbreak lasting about a fortnight, and involving in the Hampshire ranks the loss of four men. There were six cases altogether.

"After the Armistice was signed," wrote a member of the Battalion, "it was decided to withdraw as many white troops as possible from the actual front, and form them into mobile brigades in the rear of the line ready to push up to any position when necessary. The battalion was consequently withdrawn from Kohat on June 22nd, and ordered back to Umbala to join the 43rd Mobile Brigade, ready to be pushed to any part of the frontier where necessary at a moment's notice.

"From Kohat to Rawalpindi is up-hill practically the whole way, the greatest incline being just by Jhand Junction. Our train was a heavy one, being made up of forty-eight bogies, and after three attempts it was found impossible to negotiate this hill, owing partly to the weight of the train and partly to an obsolete engine. After the third attempt the troops were ordered out—leaving only one man per bogie to look after the rifles—and they walked up the hill, waiting for the train on the other side of the crest. We were due in at Umbala by 11 p.m. on the 23rd but did not get there until 2.30 p.m. on the 24th.

"When one realises that the area of Afghanistan is equal to that of France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany, it will be easily seen that the task of keeping the Afghans in order with a mere handful of white troops is no light job."

CHAPTER XXXIX.—ASIA.

Siberia. 1/9th Battalion

The 1/9th Hampshires was easily the most travelled of all the county battalions in the war; the only units which approached it for variety of service were the two battalions of the 4th. The itinerary of the 1/9th, briefly stated, included India and Siberia, which, though it does not take long to write, stands for very many thousands of miles of the most strenuous travelling. The 2/4th's range included India, Palestine, and France, less in the matter of distance, though it included fighting on a couple of fronts. The 1/4th had a tour in India, a long spell of fighting and travel in Asia, and then an incursion through Persia to the Caspian Sea. For that matter the 2nd (Regular) Battalion had a terrific amount of travelling to do also, seeing that they came from Bombay to England, then went to the Dardanelles, then to France, and finally to North Russia. However, these comparisons do not stand for very much because they were governed by the merest chance.

The 1/9th had plenty of thrills if little fighting to do. Also they had a longer spell than most of the somewhat wearisome business of coast-watching in England before they crossed the seas at all. That wasn't chance; that was connected with the circumstance that the 9th was a cyclist battalion, and therefore more useful for that particular duty than other troops. It was as everyone realises, dreary work, but not without excitement, for no one actually knew what would be the position of troops on the east and southern coasts in a certain set of circumstances which never, in fact, arose, but which very easily might have done. It meant that everyone had to be on their toes for

many weary months, and not at intervals, but day and night.

India for the 9th was a comparatively brief experience. They were at Bangalore for a bit, and then at other stations, but it was not long before they were sent out into the snows of Siberia in the endeavour to save civilisation in that remote and spacious land. There, too, anything might have happened, for the battalion, apart from the physical discomforts of a quick change from India's coral sands to a place at least as inhospitable as Greenland's icy mountains, they were living on an active volcano in the distant east. They did not know what would happen—nor did anyone else—and if the expectation not uncommon at the time had come about, the 9th were too far away for relief to be possible. They would have had to play their hand out alone, and their record was sufficient guarantee that they would have played it creditably.

But about the purely physical side of the matter: there was more in that than is indicated in what I have said. Their stay in India was during a "hot weather" of quite unexampled fierceness. They had endured a temperature of 115 deg. Fahr., and six months later at Irkutsk the thermometer registered 69 deg. Fahr. below zero, which was something like 100 degrees of frost. But the 9th was a fit battalion; they were athletes many of them, who had been attracted to the battalion before the war because it was a cyclist unit, and they had left India with a clean bill of health, which explains why they suffered from the change very little.

The journey of the battalion to the heart of Siberia was by stages and in sections. The whole battalion was a few days at Vladivostok being fitted with the equipment necessary for their journey—wool-lined overcoats, mocassins, and the like—and then they started, D Company first, and then at brief intervals C B and A Companies. Right across Manchuria they went in the comfortless trains of Asia, learning only by hard experience how to keep a reasonable measure of warmth in, and, not less important, how to keep boredom out.

Of course they did not know where they were going, or what their function might be when they got there. They were pretty well alone in that vast land except for a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment, commanded by Colonel John Ward, the Navvies' M.P. Perhaps the best kind of understanding of the functions of the 9th Battalion may be gathered from a speech which the very gallant Colonel of the Diehards delivered in the House of Commons after his return. He was speaking of the Middlesex Regiment, of course, but they had so to speak common cause with the Hampshires.

The British troops in the East were not there, as Colonel Ward's instructions showed, as an act of hostility to the Russians. They were there to help the people and to fraternise with those elements which sought to maintain order and some approach to decent government. High policy was involved in the enterprise of sending British troops into the heart of Russia. The moment was one of the gravest anxiety in the West; the situation there consequent on the release of German divisions from the Russian line was more serious than at any time in the war, for we did not know then that it was the last convulsive effort of the enemy. It appeared to be sound policy to reconstruct the Russian front so that it might cause the Germans anxiety. It was a tremendous task, for the Bolshevik forces were not wholly or mainly Russian; there were hordes of German and Austrian prisoners ostensibly fighting for Russia, but in reality keeping open the roadway for the supply organisations of Germany. In the one big battle fought on that far distant front between the Bolsheviks and the Japanese, Czechs, and detachments of the Middlesex and French troops, the Hampshires appear to have had no part.

They were at Omsk, very far distant, later on, when Colonel Ward and the Diehards had evolved some kind of order out of the indescribable chaos which existed. They were there at the time that Omsk became the centre of government, the rallying point for the forces led by Admiral Koltchak, and one of the little sidelines of the battalion was to give an entertainment, which the Admiral attended, to demonstrate the ubiquity of the British soldier. It was immensely valuable as propaganda, for it helped to stabilise local opinion. All this time there was a possibility of fighting of the bitterest sort, though it never materialised. Of course it took the Hampshires a long time to get out of Russia. They were so remote, and the situation so complex, and the result was that their return was greatly delayed. And, incidentally, when they did finally return the 9th was the only Hampshire battalion which enjoyed the chance of marching through Southampton on landing as a complete unit, which was not until December, 1919.

CHAPTER XL.—Persia. 1/4th Battalion

This chapter concerns the 1/4th Hampshires, the unit which had so distinguished a record in Mesopotamia, but which, when things began to settle down there, had not the luck to be sent home. Instead, they were sent into Persia, being one of four or five Hampshire battalions who were fighting long after warfare had ceased on the main battle fronts. Here is an admirable little picture of the 1/4th Hampshires' adventure into Persia written by one who died out there. "We had a very cold and rough journey into Persia. Some days we could only do about ten miles owing to heavy rain and climatic conditions, and others we did 50 or 60 miles (this was by motor cars). At night we stayed in camps on the roadside. We got to Kainid the day before Christmas, and pitched a small tent. That night it snowed hard, and we thought that at any moment the tent would come down with the weight of snow upon it. Christmas morning two of us shifted the snow and dug a trench in a heavy snowstorm, whilst the third man of our party cooked our breakfast, the oven being made by us out of a kerosene oil tin. The water came in, and we had the bottom of our tent all wet mud, and at 7.30 we went to bed on our camp folding-beds, that being the only dry place. All next day is snowed hard. On New Year's Day we motored in a heavy snow blizzard, and eventually reached Hamadan on January 2nd. It was bitterly cold; much colder than we ever get it in England. I cannot say much for the Persian. He is a dirty individual, and the whole country is rotten to the core."

The 1/4th penetrated through Northern Persia as far as Baku on the Caspian Sea, having on the road some hard fighting with the Jungalies, a North Persian tribe, which had espoused the German cause. It was to rout out this plague-spot in a land in which revolutionary activity flourished only too richly that the battalion (with Ghurka troops) were sent forward from the Mesopotamia Field Force. Hampshiremen had thus, as one of the county newspapers put it, the honour of opening the gate to the East. It was the terrain over which Russian and Turkish troops had fought earlier in the war, during the attempt of the Russians to join hands with the British marching towards Baghdad. The Hampshires and the Ghurkas were formed into a composite column under the former's C.O., Colonel Matthews, D.S.O. They had, as the extract quoted shows, a difficult journey, and a great deal of trouble in catching the tribesmen operating in their native hills and bringing them to battle. Once they came up with them in wooded country, and there was some brief but fierce scrapping, in which the Hampshire Territorials used their bayonets so effectively—the Ghurkas also were not unhandy with cold steel—that the Jungalies fled again. It was tiring and trying fighting, for there were no opportunities for rest; no billets, and naturally no sort of comfort, added to which there was the ever-present chances of attack by a treacherous enemy, and in the event of a serious situation developing, a pretty thin prospect of relief. There is an extract from a letter written by one who was engaged, which gives a picture of this sort of fighting. It was contributed to the "Hampshire Observer," and relates to one of the surprise attacks which were a feature of the fighting in which this composite column was involved: "Night after night a telephone message came through that we were to expect an attack, but these attacks failed to mature. We had just finished dinner in the open—another telephone message:—"To-night is the night'—the news was passed round as usual, the pickets' posts strengthened, and those of us who were able, retired to rest. There was no mistaking, the attack had started in real earnest. I looked at my watch, it was half-past four. The Jungalies had surrounded the whole of our position in the early hours of the morning, whilst it was yet dark. They waited until the pickets had been withdrawn, as was usual half an hour after day break, and then closed in. On our side of the fighting the very valiant approached within thirty yeards of our headquarters' billet, and opened rapid fire. Things now began to move, the Hampshires and Gurkas, in small parties, charged right into the foe. In spite of our small numbers, the Jungalies commenced retiring, losing very heavily in the first onslaught. Prisoners were soon brought in, and amongst them an Austrian warrant officer. He seemed truly glad to be out of it, and gave us a good deal of useful information. The Jungali force surrounding us was composed of twelve hundred men. Four hundred had attacked on the opposite side, where C Company of the Hampshires and the Gurkas were billeted, and apparently four hundred

were being held in reserve on the Resht Enzelli road. Fortunately, just before the telephone wires were cut, a message was sent through to Imam Zadeh, asking the Gurkas there to come in, and another to Enzelli recalling No. 13 Platoon of the Hampshires. I don't think, when attacked, we had more than three hundred fighting men all told. If it had not been for the wonderful dash and bravery of the men we would have been in a sorry plight, as the night before our provisions had been cut off by the Governor of Resht." In one case a platoon of Hampshires was surrounded, but succeeded in cutting its way through. The Ghurkas, too, made the deadliest play with their kukris. One thinks this must be the occasion which was in the mind of a missionary from Persia when he spoke of an engagement between the Hampshires and tribesmen led by German and Austrian officers near the Caspian. A position was being held by 400 Hampshires and Ghurkas. Through the treachery of the Governor of the place, the enemy, numbering 1,200, surrounded the garrison, and matters looked very black. It was useless to wage a defensive battle, for all supplies had been cut off, and the only alternatives were to surrender or take the offensive. To the utter surprise of the attackers this latter course was instantly taken. With reckless bravery Hampshires and Ghurkas dashed full in the face of the enemy, and completely routed them. In one of the Church Missionary Society's hospitals in Persia there is now a "Hampshire Ward."

CHAPTER XLI.—RUSSIA.

Murmansk. 2nd Battalion

No one expected, having regard to the Hampshires' war record of service upon every front save those of South-West and German East Africa, that the regiment would be unrepresented on the Murmansk Coast. It seemed inevitable. The task fell upon the greatly-travelled 2nd Battalion, though the formation was utterly different from that which had served in France. It was just the luck of their return which let them in for the trying and unsatisfactory experience of the Northern Russia campaign. The 2nd Battalion returned home from France in the late spring of 1919, just in time to be drawn upon for service in the north. It was intended that a composite battalion should be sent, to which the Hampshires' contribution would be Headquarters and one Company, other south country units being drawn upon to fill the ranks. This plan was not possible, so all formations at Aldershot were used as a reservoir, and a full battalion thus made up. It was given the name of the 2nd Hampshires, and inherited all the traditions of that magnificent battalion.

The assembly took place at Crowborough, and the voyage to Murmansk was made in the s.s. Stephen, sailing from Tilbury. From Murmansk the vessel sailed through the pack-ice for Archangel, and finally steamed up the Dvina, anchoring at Archangel towards the end of May. The warmest of welcome was extended to the brigade of which the Hampshires formed part, the inhabitants presenting trays of bread to the Brigadier (Brigadier-General Grogan, C.V.), and to the colonel of each battalion (the Hampshires' C.O. was Col. Sherwood Kelly, V.C.), in token. The tray, the salt-cellar, and the cloth, the insignia of this spectacular ceremonial, were sent home subsequently to be placed among the other trophies of the war at the depot. Another mark of the welcome was the erection of a triumphal arch, and there was much feteing for officers and men before moving out to the front.

General Ironside inspected the troops, and told them that the bare news of their arrival had so scared the Bolsheviks that 400 in the hands of the British had turned pro-ally. Like other Hampshire troops in other fields, the battalion was sent to the front in boats. It was not a happy experience. According to one writer in the Regimental Journal, the "black-hole of Calcutta" was badly beaten by the troop-deck of the vessel which bore the Hampshires. Quarters were not only bad; the overcrowding was terrible. The men enjoyed brief "spells" ashore, experiencing always the warmest of welcomes.

The actual front was "healthier" than the men had experienced in France. There

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT WAR MEMORIAL.

The Memorial to all Hampshiremen who fell in the Great War which it is proposed to erect in the precincts of Winchester Cathedral, is from the designs of Mr. Herbert Baker, F.R.I.B.A., and will be the Central County Memorial commemorative of all Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen from all the towns and villages who fought and died for England. The Gatehouse will contain all the names of, and be the special Memorial to the Hampshire Regiment—Regular, Territorial and Service Battalions, the Carabiniers, and the units of Engineers, Artillery, R.A.S.C., and R.A.M.C. raised in the County, and for H.M.S. Hampshire. The Cross will be dedicated to the Memory of all Hampshiremen of all Regiments. There will also be a fund administered by the Hampshire and I. of W. Military Aid Fund to assist Officers and Men of all Hampshire Units

was no enemy in a trench fifty yards away; there was small need to live in a trench at all, for Nomansland had a span of three miles, which was regarded as sufficient elbow-room after the experience of most of the men in France. Like the amphibious Hampshiremen in Mesopotamia, the troops were plagued with mosquitoes, though the comparison between the lot of those who served in the Asian plain and those who were set down in Northern Russia stopped there.

Patrol work and reconnaissance occupied most of the time, for the Bolo, as the enemy was always called for some obscure reason, was a difficult customer to bring to battle. It was never any use waiting for him to come on, so he had to be hunted up, and that meant travelling under terrible difficulties and generally bad conditions. One march through a forest included the negotiation of a swamp five hundred yards across, which the mules refused to approach. Everything in consequence had to be carried across by the men, who went in up to the knees. There were several of these marshes in the route on this particular occasion. There was a fight after an eighteen hours' march near Triotsa, but it was inconclusive, for it was apparent that the support of the Russian elements which had been regarded as loyal was a little limp, to put it kindly, and the Hampshiremen had to withdraw again. Their situation at one time was rather serious, for they were heavily outnumbered, but they disentangled themselves during the indecision, which resulted from the fact that the men were giving orders to the officers in the Bolo Army and arguing about it a good deal before deciding on the form of them. It was all very tangled and hopeless from the beginning. The general strategic purpose of the British troops was to strengthen and hearten the loyal elements among the Russians in order that they might recover sufficient power to set their own house in order. That might have worked out to some satisfactory purpose if the Russians had understood that what the British wanted to do was to show them the way to manage their own affairs. In fact they were only too willing to let their guests shoulder the whole burden. Their backs broke under the simplest of loads—when responsibility was included in the pack, and there were countless occasions when British and Russian troops were operating in concert—or were supposed to be—that the British were let down, in the soldier's phrase.

It was bitter campaigning, too. Supplies were often difficult to come by because of transport difficulties: the climate was an abomination, and the burden laid on the troops in the way of long duty and hard labour was almost intolerable. It was a thoroughly sad and unsatisfactory business, devoid of military importance, empty of chances of glory almost, but it had to be carried through, and it was. The Hampshiremen came out of it all with credit, because it was their habit to stick to their job, but they were glad to get out. It may be years before we know what really happened in the northern mists. Many brave Hampshiremen lie buried there, and others will have bitter memories concerning the trials of the campaign.

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